إنجليزي

INQUIRIES ABOUT ISLAM

تساؤلات حول الإسلام



The Scholar
Mohamad Jawad Chirri

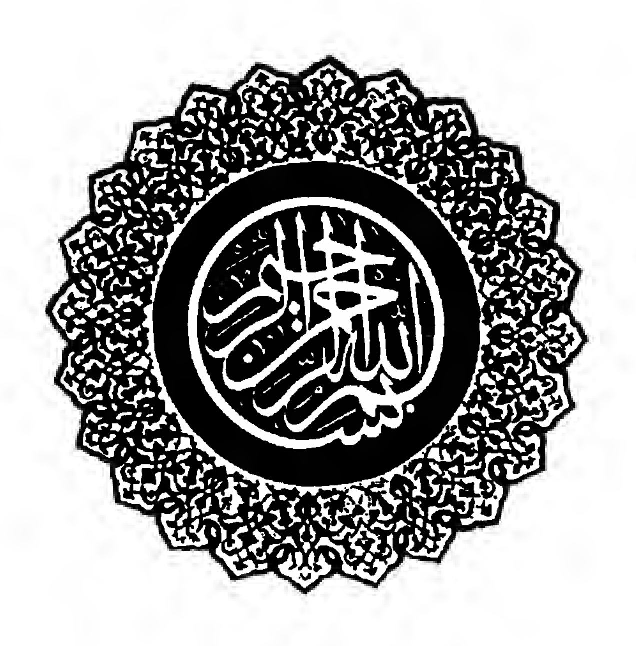
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About the Author

Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri is a native of Lebanon and a graduate of the distinguished religious institute of Najaf, in Iraq. He is a theologian and lecturer. The Islamic community invited him to Detroit, Michigan, in 1949. Imam Chirri is the director and spiritual leader of the Islamic Center of America, 15571 Joy Road, Detroit, Michigan 48228.

His work extends far enough to include West Africa and the Middle East. Two important Islamic schools of thought had been in disagreement and dispute for centuries. While on a lecture tour of West Africa and the Middle East, in 1959, Imam Chirri called upon the head of the sunni school, Sheikh Al-Azhar in Cairo, to recognize the other school.

In response to Imam Chirri's call, the majority leader issued a historical declaration which stated that the teachings of both schools are equally sound, and that Muslims have the right to choose either one.



Contents

Introduction

If only the just man, who is free from his previous opinions looked and searched about Islam, which is the seal of the Devinely religions about which the univers are responsible infront of Allah the Lord of the worlds, if only they percieved it with opened eye in the purpose of the fact studying, they should find their intention.

Hence the religion, which is harmonized with the intellect, by the way of which the human should find the salvation for his spiritual and physical troubles, and by which the happiness and the spiritual calmness should be achieved, so it is authorized with the man to study it, but he should spend much of his time and endeavor, in order to be aware about its fundamentals, and branches, and what is supposed to Muslims to do indeed, the man is the main purpose according to the Islamic view. Within these communities, their creator honored them, and employed every thing in serving them. But Allah distinguished between the good and harmful deeds through this present life so that he should learn and commanded him by the good deeds following, and that which is allowable, and He prevented him from the harmful deeds comittion which are prohibited. He domonstrated all that on the tongue of his apostles and prophets, who are the bearers of good news and warners, so he should be rewarded by the ever lasting paradise, in case that he behaved according to the teaching of Allah "s.w." and His commands, and he should be punished by the flame of the Hell if he followed his desirance and apitancy, violating his Lord's commands; indeed we never

find through this natural pattern save the ease, relief, and the happiness, through which all the energy and the abilities shall appear, so that, they serve the human being, then he shall become unlimited capability of the beneficence, and good deeds, while this actually is the intention of the human, who should be instructed in good fashion and manner, so that he should be a benefitable member in his society.

Hence, this book is between your hands, was written by the late Ash-Shaikh Muhammad Jawaad Shirri, who is an American popular, he studied Islam near its pure sources in Najaf Ashraf, he liked Islam, since he found all his needs of belief in it, indeed he purposed to serve his brothers by the way of his calm and quite invitation towards them, so that they could search about the oppressed fact calmly and wisely, then they could find their intention, but he already went on his style of pure argumentation within this book, which is far from the fanaticism with doctor Wilson using the clear Islamic evidence and the Holy verses and illustrated the evidences of the Holy Quran as means to receive the purpose of the argumentation and knowing the truth, then the submission to it.

Whereat this book between your hands is of the famous and important books, which illuminated the way of the people guidance in America, Europe and other countries concerned the mass and necessary demands, which Imam Ali foundation, the main branch in Qom took upon it self this book republish, while it considered it as one of its duties to republish it for the purpose of the common benefit.

Hence, we ask Allah to include the late chirri into his a bundent Mercy, and to accept this work for his contentment.

Imam Ali (a.s.) Foundation,
Iran - Qom

Introduction

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds and may peace an benediction be with our master, Mohammad and his Pure Progeny.

For a verity of reasons many a Muslim took Europe, an America and other contries that are predomintly non-Muslim for residence, be it temporary or permanent.

By virtue of such domicile, Muslims have to meet with non-Muslims at work, study, places of worship, or socially.

Such encounters' may entail discussion on different matters, including religious issues, where Muslims and non-Muslims alike may quiz one another about their respective faiths.

Since many people are genuine in their search for the truth, especially in matters of spiritual purity and faith, people of different faiths try to leave an impact on their fellow human beings. However, those who embrace the sublime truth, that man should eventually acknowledge, are the ones who prevail.

The story of the late Sheikh Mohammad Jawad Chirri is such that it left an endelible mark on the history of

human dialogue and understanding.

Sheikh Chirri, who was educated in the Islamic seminary at Holy an-Najaf, Iraq, immigrated from Lebanon to the States in the early 1950s and settled in Detroit. His new home and environment led him to engage in debate on Islam and Christianity, with Dr. Wilson H. Guertin of University of Florida.

"Inquires About Islam" records the topics debated by the two men. It is a true and honest account of what took place. Thus, it could serve as an ideal reference for all and seekers of truth and pristine faith.

Many a Muslim, especially youths approached Imam Ali (a.s.) Foundation in London to provide them with material to help them conduct fruitful dialogue. The Foundation consulted a number of experts in the field. They suggested that this book, written by Sheikh Chirri, ranks among the best in its class and subject matter. It is known for its direct style and exquisite discourse.

Thus, we took the initiative to seek the permission of the Islamic Center of Detroit, U.S.A. to reprint the book, they obliged.

In the end, we pray to Allah, the Exalted to shower the soul of the late Sheikh Chirri with His mercy, and grant him abode in Paradise. May He reward him for his commendable work, Amen.

Imam Ali (a.s.) Foundation,
London

Foreword

Centuries ago when the nobles in the service of the Catholic Church drove the Muslims. out of Europe, the message of Mohammad also was expurgated from the Western world. Had this power struggle never occurred, there would have been less need for Arab scholars and teachers like Imam Mohammad Jawad Chirri to bring God's Message to the Western world. These rare men leave family and friends because they see the centuries of unfulfilled need in America for theological clarification of the requirements God makes upon mankind.

I am one of the many who have benefited from Imam Mohamad Chirri's teaching. I was his first "convert"; but never having been a believing Christian, it would be more exact to say that I came to believe in God for the first time through the path of Islam, patiently guided by my imam.

If you are a Muslim, read this book out of the obligation to acquire knowledge. If you are a Jew or Christian, read it for the same devout motive. Comparative study of religions may be unsettling if your belief in God is based upon non-rational grounds but can only have the ultimately desired result of strengthening your belief. The pervasive belief in God as represented in our motives must be the goal which

our religious educators work toward, with gains in sectarian support becoming quite secondary .

If you are unable to say that you believe in God, you can still find value in the study of religion. In the following pages of dialogue, you will be pursuing some of the most important concerns of mankind that can be traced back to the beginning of recorded history. The thoughts and historical events are important in their own right, and perhaps you will, as I have, find the way to a belief in God through them.

Colonial Britain has been more fortunate than we in America in having the history and teachings of Islam accessible. It is no accident that while no really great American has expressed his recognition of the value of Islam, three of the most famous British writers fully acknowledge the importance and value of Islam. They are: Arnold Toynbee, historian; Bertrand Russell, philosopher; and George Bernard Shaw, playwright. Out of respect for these figures, we will want to know more about that which they value so highly.

Wilson H. GuertinJ Ph.D.
University of Florida

preface

Dr. Wilson: H. Guertin is a scientist and an outstanding psychologist. In addition, he has a great deal of respect towards religion and possesses a broad knowledge in theology.

His interest in religion represents the interest of a scientist who thinks that religion, in general, contains some truth, in spite of being clouded by man's misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

We can hardly expect a scientist, who deals with facts and tries to unveil the secrets of nature and life, to believe in a religious teaching irreconcilable with the bare reality of nature, or with what had become an established scientific knowledge. A scientist, faced with a religious teaching opposed to the bare facts of the bare facts of nature or to an established scientific knowledge, is likely to take one of the following position:

A. He may take a radical attitude by an outright rejection of religion in any form.

B. He may try to reconcile the religious concept with the established knowledge by interpreting the former in a way that will not clash with the latter.

C. He may study other religions in order to find one that is not opposed to logic and to the facts of nature.

Dr. Guertin took the third position and tried to find the truth by conducting a religious research in many religious avenues.

His research was intensive. He examined many kinds of religious teachings, and finally came to examine the teaching of Islam.

"I am a Christian by birth," he told me, "but ever since my early adulthood and extensive academic training, I have had doubts. As a scientist, I am no longer able to accept any religious doctrine that is inconsistent with a scientific knowledge. Having an inquisitive spirit, I tried to satisfy my doubt by looking into some religious teachings other than that of my own denomination. I tried many religious avenues, but I was never able to satisfy my doubt.

"Finally, I read some literature about Islam, and that made me interested in acquiring more information about it. Now as I come to you, I am hopeful that I will be able to have a better knowledge of your faith. I understand that you have a profound knowledge of Islam, and that you are specialized in this field. I would like to conduct a research on Islam with you, and I am confident that you will be able to answer my questions."

The questions which he directed to me may come to the mind of any person who tries to find the truth in Islam and about Islam. I thought, therefore, that those questions and their answers ought to be recorded and published, and that a book containing our dialogues might be useful to any individual who has doubts and wants to find answers to

pertinent questions.

I know that a great number of people have similar problems, but they act indifferently. They keep their doubt and seek no guidance. Some of them turn their back on the whole religious issue, while others remain within their respective denominations with no earnest desire to seek the truth.

Distinguished, indeed, are those who feel thirsty for religious knowledge and energetic enough to try to quench their thirst. This book is aimed to inform these seekers of truth and to satisfy the curiosity of anyone that may read it. If it should help the reader to clarify his religious thought, if it should bring about a better understanding of Islam, and if it should create a closer cooperation among the major religions, then the author would feel most gratified and extremely rewarded .

Mohamad Jawad Chirri



INQUIRY ABOUT ISLAM



INQUIRY/ 1

Freedom of Discussion in Islam

Wilson: Some religions discourage the questioning attitude in regard to the soundness of their teachings. They advise their followers to follow their instructions without examination. They demand faith and prohibit acquaintance with any other faith because it may lead to doubt. What is the attitude of Islam towards questioning its teaching and comparing its principles with those of other faiths?

Chirri: Islam is very liberal in this matter. It may demand from a person to believe in certain principles but, at the same time, it advises him to try to base his belief on evidence. It sets him free to raise any question and does not condemn him when he doubts, if his doubt is followed by an intensive effort to find the truth. If any other religion advises him to avoid discussing principles other than its own and makes him fear provoking the anger of God by doing so, Islam makes one feel secure from God's anger if he pursues his search for the truth.

As a matter of fact, Islam never advises one to avoid

discussion. that may lead to a new knowledge and a new discovery of a truth. Be not afraid, Islam advises, to discuss any religious principle, whether it is Islamic or non-Islamic. Never worry or fear God's anger because He is the God of truth, He never condemns a person for seeking truth. On the contrary, the more one seeks the truth and conducts intensive research, the more he deserves the Divine reward from the Islamic point of view.

The most rewarding and meritorious attitude, in the eyes of Islam, is to approach religious issues with the spirit of a scientist who welcomes any evidence that may prove or disprove his theory (or a theory to which he may subscribe).

Wilson: Does Islam have any specific rule or advice concerning religious research ?

Chirri: There are certain rules contained in the Holy Qur'an to be followed in religious research for the safety of any conclusion that may be reached.

1. Never embrace a doctrine when evidence stands against it, nor should one follow a principle without evidence.

If God wants a person to believe in a principle, He should make it clear and evident. He is the Most Fair and Just. He knows that belief is not a voluntary thing; that is, it is not up to the individual. A person is not able to believe or disbelieve anything he chooses. The human body is at one's command but not the mind. I can obey a command that tells me to move my hand up or down, to walk or sit, even if such a command does not seem to be wise. But I am not able to obey a command, for example,

that tells me to believe that two and two are five, or that three are one, or that fire is cold, or that snow is hot.

Our human knowledge comes from direct or indirect evidence, and it does not follow our own whim and will. An acceptable religious belief must be based on knowledge. When God wants me to know something, He should make such a knowledge possible by making its evidence available. Should He demand from me to believe something while evidence is standing against it, He would be asking me to do the impossible. This contradicts His justice.

Islam never condemns an individual when he does not believe in a principle because of lack of evidence; on the contrary, Islam blames a person when he follows a principle while groping in the dark without illuminating evidence, or when such a principle is not in accordance with the truth.

Following a principle against evidence, or with lack of evidence, is like a judgement of a court against a defendant without any evidence. Such an attitude is not to be praised; From the Holy Qu'ran:

> "And follow not that of which thou hast no knowledge"
>
> "Surely the hearing and sight and the heart, all of these will be asked about it." 17:36

2. Never accept popularity at face value. A religious researcher should not take the popularity of a religious doctrine in his society as an evidence of its truth. Many popular ideas have been proved wrong. At one time, it was believed that the earth is flat and that the sun revolves around the earth. People believed this for thousands of years, but now we know that neither of these ideas is true.

Furthermore, what is popular in one society may be

unpopular in another. The opposite is also true. If popularity is a sign of soundness, all those popular ideas which contradict each other would be true, but truth never contradicts itself.

When the first prophet came to proclaim the concept of one God, his message was not popular in any society because the people of the world were either pagans or non-believers. The unpopularity of such a Divine message did not prevent that message from being true. As a matter of fact, all the prophets came to their societies with unpopular messages. Their aim was to correct the popular wrong and replace it with the unpopular truth. From the Qur'an:

> "And if thou obey most of the inhabitants of the earth, they will mislead thee far from the way of God:
>
> "They follow naught but an opinion, and they do but guess" 6:116

3. Inherited religious principles should be examined. Islam advises every adult to examine the religion which he inherited. Inherited religion, like any other religion, is subject to proof.

One may rely on the judgement of his parents as long as he is a child and not capable of making his own decisions. When he becomes an adult, his religion becomes his own responsibility. Respect and honor towards parents is one of the Islamic commandments, but that does not mean accepting their opinions in important matters such as religion when their opinion is wrong.

As a matter of fact, when parents adhere to a wrong religious principle and demand from their children to follow them, they should not be obeyed because such action would

be contrary to the will of God; that is, if a person obeys his parents when they are wrong, he disobeys God. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "And we have enjoined on man concerning parents . . . . saying:
>
> "Give thanks to Me and to thy Parents. To Me is the eventual coming. And if they strive with thee to make thee associate with Me that of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not, and keep kindly company with them in this world."31:14-15

Islam commands the individual to examine its own teaching as well as any other teaching. By doing so, one may be able to value Islam more than ever before.

4. Doubters are not excused. When a person is not committed to any religion and doubts the whole religious concept, he should not be satisfied with his doubt. It is his duty to protect himself and his vital interests in this world from any harm and damage. Similarly, he has the same responsibility and duty in protecting his spiritual interest from being damaged. His serious inquiry about what may have a bearing on his spiritual life is as important as his inquiry about what may have a bearing on his physical life. In order to carry out his responsibility and to fulfill his obligation, it is necessary for him to inquire, and inquire seriously, about his religious doubts. There may be many accessible facts in the doubted area; therefore, he has to try to find them. When he conducts his research and exhausts all his means and fails to find the truth, he would be excused in the eyes of God. God asks the individual only to do what is possible for him to do. From the Qur'an:

> "God does not impose on a soul a duty but to the extent of its ability." 2:286

5. When you conduct a religious research, let no one make decisions for you. Do not rely on the judgement of any other person, even if he is sincere and highly intellectual.

There are sincere and intellectual teachers in every faith. If a person allows them to make religious decisions for him, he will be lost because these teachers will undoubtedly contradict each other. If he relies on the judgement of teachers of only one faith, disregarding the teachers of other faiths, he will be biased. A sincere and highly intellectual teacher can be wrong, and one is not excused if he follows the judgement of this teacher. One's religion is his responsibility and after he makes his extensive inquiry, he is the sole judge to reach conclusions and form opinions. From the Qur'an:

> "And no bearer will bear other's burden. . . ." 35:18, 53:38

Thus, we can see from these five Qur'anic verses that Islam is not afraid of being questioned or analyzed. Only those who fear failure forbid free discussion of their religious principles and avoid examination by researchers.

INQUIRY /2

Definition of Islam

Wilson: One of the important things in any discussion is to define the subject. As we shall proceed to discuss Islam, I would like to hear a definition of the meaning of the word "Islam" because it is an Arabic word. I have heard more than one definition of this word; so I would like to hear yours. "Muslim" is another Arabic word which ought to be defined for the benefit of the non-Arabs who may read it very often without understanding its full meaning, or may confuse it with the word Islam.

Chirri: The original meaning of "Islam" is the acceptance of a view or a condition which previously was not accepted. In the language of the Holy Qur'an, Islam means the readiness of a person to take orders from God and to follow them. "Muslim" is a word taken from the word Islam. It applies to the person who is ready to take orders from God and follow them.

> "Abraham was not a Jew nor a Christian, but he was an upright (man), a Muslim; and he was

not one of the polytheists." 3:67

The two words, however, acquired specific meanings after the introduction of the message which was conveyed by the Prophet Mohammad. The message which was revealed to Mohammad is called Islam, and to profess the belief in his message is also Islam. Muslim, also, has come to mean the person who follows the message of Mohammad and believes in its truthfulness.

Wilson: What is the relation between the original meaning of Islam and the specific meaning which the word acquired after the advent of Mohammad?

Chirri: The new meaning of the word is closely related to the original one because Mohammad stated that his teachings contain the teachings of all the previous prophets and all the Divine commandments. When a person professes the belief in the truthfulness of Mohammad and pledges to follow his message, he, in fact, will be stating his readiness to obey the orders of God unconditionally.

Wilson: There are certain procedures prescribed, for example, by Christianity for a person who likes to join the Christian faith. Baptism is one of the sacraments which, according to most of the Christian denominations, a new convert has to have in order to become a Christian. Are there any prescribed procedures to be followed by a person who likes to join the faith of Islam?

Chirri: No sacraments or procedures are prescribed for a person who likes to join the faith of Islam. One needs only to pronounce or to believe in the contents of the Declaration of the Faith:

"I bear witness that there is no God but the Almighty God and that Mohammad is a messenger of God."

Wilson: Why is such a pronouncement sufficient for the admission of a person into the faith of Islam?

Chirri: When a person states that he believes in the truthfulness of Mohammad, he actually states that he believes in all what Mohammad introduced and in all his teachings. This includes all the Qur'anic teachings, all the deeds and all the sayings of Mohammad, whether in the matter of belief or in the area of practice.

When a person believes in the contents of the Declaration of the Faith, he automatically becomes a Muslim. His pronouncement of the Declaration is a proof to the other Muslims that he is a believer in Islam. Because of this, no Muslim can deny him the admission into the faith because he is a believer in Islam and needs nothing more beyond it.

Wilson: Is a new convert considered equal to a person who was born a Muslim?

Chirri: A Muslim convert is equal to any other Muslim in the eyes of the Holy Qur'an. Furthermore, a convert has more advantages than a born Muslim for two reasons:

1. A convert deserves a bigger reward from God than a born Muslim. A convert becomes a Muslim usually after a great deal of research and some psychological crisis, because changing religion is not an easy task. It takes a great deal of courage and effort on the part of the convert, while a born Muslim receives his religion by inheritance.

2. A convert is considered, by his conversion to Islam,

pure and free of any previous sin. All his previous sins are wiped out entirely. He will be responsible only for the sins which he commits after becoming a Muslim. Thus, if a person becomes a Muslim in the early morning, after sunrise, then he dies before noon, he is entitled to enter paradise without having practiced or performed any of the devotional duties which a Muslim is required to do, He did not have to perform morning prayer because his conversion to Islam took place after sunrise, nor did he have to perform the noon prayer because he did not live until noon, the prayer time.

Wilson: Sometimes I find that Islam is called "Deen-Al-Touhid" and sometimes "Deen-Al-Fitrah." Since the two names are Arabic, they should be defined for the benefit of the non-Arabs. The reasons for which Islam has these names should also be made clear .

Chirri: "Deen-Al-Touhid" means the religion of the belief in the Oneness of God, and "Deen-Al-Fitrah" , means the religion of the nature or the religion which is in accordance with human nature.

Islam is called the religion of One God because its main theme is the unity of God. The doctrine of One God is the most emphasized and repeated principle in the Holy Qur'an. When Islam was introduced to the world, people were mostly idol-worshippers. Some religions preached the Oneness of God but in an unclear form. Some of them ascribed to God an anthropomorphic image. The most important point of the contents of the new heavenly message was to correct the idol-worshippers and to remove whatever clouded the concept of One God.

Islam is called the religion of nature because its teaching is acceptable to the human mind when the human mind is freed from illogical thinking and superstition.

> The Prophet Mohammad said:
>
> "Every human being is born in a state of pure nature; but through the influence of his parents, he may become non-Muslim."

When a person is freed from illogical thinking, he can easily, just by looking at the order of the universe. conclude that the universe has only One Creator. It is easy to accept a teaching that calls upon us to believe that the over-four-billion-year-old universe had been created by an Infinitely Old Creator. But it is neither simple nor easy to identify that Creator with a mortal whose birth took place four billion years after the creation of the universe .

It is natural to accept a teaching that calls upon us to believe that the Creator of the universe is Absolutely Fair , Just, and Merciful, and that such a Just and Merciful Creator does not burden any soul with the sin of another; and that He does not require any person to pay for the sins of others.

The teaching of Islam seems to be acceptable to the human mind, unless the human mind has been exposed to illogical teaching. This is the reason why Islam is called the religion of nature.

INQUIRY /3

Why Is Islam Popular?

Wilson: History indicates that Islam spread in its early times through Asia, Africa, and Europe very rapidly. Probably no other religion spread throughout the world as fast as Islam did. There must be some distinguishing features in Islam that caused its rapid growth and made it so phenomenal. I would like to know those factors which contributed to its rapid growth.

Chirri: There are many factors which contributed, and are still contributing, to the spread of Islam. Among them are the following factors:

1. THE HOLY QUR'AN

It is an undeniable fact that the Qur'an is a living book that has influenced millions of people through its beauty and style. The superiority of the Qur'anic discourse was, and still is, challenging. The Qur'an itself called upon its opponents to try to produce a discourse that measures up to it.

The Qur'an repeatedly states that if the opponents will produce at any time a comparable discourse, they will automatically disprove the whole faith of Islam. The Qur'an has remained standing above and beyond any comparison in the whole Arabic literature ever since its revelation in the 7th century. The Holy Qur'an, therefore, has remained since the time of its introduction until now a great source of attraction for the Islamic faith.

2. THE PERSONALITY OF THE PROPHET OF ISLAM.

Mohammad was born under the shining light of history. No cloud has shrouded his birth, his existence or his life among his people. If any other prophet is considered a part of the religious history, Mohammad is a part of both the religious and the world history.

Mohammad was born in Mecca from a well-known father and mother and lived with his people forty years before he was commissioned as a prophet of God. He was observed by the people during his childhood and manhood. He was noticed by all his associates as an example of honesty and integrity. People never found in him a fault. They called him the Truthful, the Trustworthy.

Mohammad did not live as an isolated person. On the contrary, he associated with the people constantly. As a businessman, Mohammad travelled and associated with people from all walks of life, but he was never affected by their low desires or worldly ambitions. He lived in a pagan society, dominated by idol-worshippers, but he never subscribed to their ideas, nor did he join them in their faith. He lived in that world as a world to himself. He was

respected by his enemies and admired by his friends, and no prophet in history received as much as Mohammad did of spontaneous obedience from his companions.

3. THE STRONG FAITH OF THE EARLY MUSLIMS.

Due to the complete honesty and the influence of the appealing personality of Mohammad, the faith of his companions in him was unusually strong. It was based on their first-hand acquaintance with his exemplary life.

We are told that the followers of Moses refused to enter Jerusalem when commanded to do so and told him that he and his Lord should go to fight the enemies. We are told that the multitudes who had gathered around Jesus deserted him when the crisis came. Even his disciples deserted him. His chief disciple denied him three times before dawn on that fateful night. Similar situations happened to most of the prophets. None of them enjoyed a true support from their followers when they encountered a Crisis.

The companions of Mohammad, however, were different. When Mohammad was in Mecca, he and the hundreds of his followers were powerless and without any legal protection. All of them stood the test of the crisis, and none of them abandoned the faith or the Prophet. The actions of those Muslims proved their faith in Islam and the Prophet. All of them preached Islam and practiced what they preached, and every genuine Muslim gave his faith a genuine support in word and in deed.

4. THE PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM WERE A GREA T SOURCE OF ATTRACTION BECAUSE THEY WERE, AND ARE, LOGICAL AND CLEAR.

Upon serious thought, one can easily accept a religious teaching which declares the following: There is no God but the Almighty Who created the whole universe; none is worthy of worship but He; He is the Lord alone, without partner, associate, or son; He did not beget nor was He begotten, and nothing is like Him; He is the Just, the Merciful, and the Powerful, neither anthropomorphic nor physical; and His power encompasses the whole universe.

Such a simple and uncompromising monotheism is readily acceptable to the human mind which seeks an explanation to the existence of the world. It does not confuse the human mind by stating that God is One and that He, at the same time, is more than one. Nor does it represent God as a human being born out of another human being.

5. THE PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM ARE CONSISTENT AND COHESIVE.

They do not contradict each other, nor do they contradict any other established truth. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam all advocate the justice of God and His fairness. Islam, however, takes this fundamental concept and, follows it thoroughly. It builds on it many other religious concepts which follow the concept of justice inseparably. When God is just and fair, He does not impose on any soul to do what is beyond its ability. Islam tells us also that the Most Just does not hold an individual responsible except for what he does by his own choice. He does not hold a person respon-

sible for the sins of his father or forefathers because he had no control over their actions.

Islam tells us also that because God does not hold a person responsible for what his father did, He does not condemn the whole human race for a sin that was committed before the existence of any human generation. Such a condemnation is contradictory to the concept of the justice of God. Instead of burdening mankind with the original sin, Islam tells us that every human being is born pure and free of any sin, and will stay so, until he commits a sin as an adult.

6. THE PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM HAVE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS ALL ASPECTS OF THE HUMAN LIFE.

Islam, unlike many other religions, stresses the importance of both the spiritual and material aspects of the human life. God, according to Islam, does not want man to neglect his biological needs, nor is there an intrinsical conflict between our response to these needs and out spiritual development. On the contrary, the two sides are interdependent. They merge in each other and can be united in most of the human activities. A man who lacks the necessary food, warmth, and shelter, can hardly meditate, perform a devotional duty, or do good for other human beings. But when such necessities are satisfied, man can easily direct himself to his Lord.

Therefore, the well-intended work for meeting the bodily needs ought to be a portion of our religious duty. Religion, according to the Islamic teaching, does not aim at suppression of the biological desires; it aims at cultivating them

and preventing the individual from becoming excessive and harmful to himself or to society.

7. THE PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM ARE UNIVERSAL.

The universality of the Islamic teaching can be shown in its non-discriminatory teaching in regard to the human race, and in the recognition of all the previous prophets.

Since the time of its birth, Islam has carried the brand of universality. It addressed itself to the whole human race, discriminating neither among nations nor among ethnic groups. Every human being is a member of a huge family. No individual or nation is God's chosen or favorite creation because of birth, nationality, or belief in a particular dogma. People are equal in the sight of God, and everyone may have an access to the kingdom of God, if he (she) is righteous.

A truth never contradicts another truth. Therefore, Islam proclaims that there is only one heavenly religion which has been revealed at different times to the prophets whom the Almighty had commissioned to convey His messages to mankind. It is inconceivable that the Almighty would reveal a certain doctrine to one messenger and then reveal to another messenger a doctrine that contradicts the first one. The Almighty has revealed his heavenly principles, commandments and laws at different stages of the human civilization according to the capacity of the human understanding. The subsequent revelation supplements, and never contradicts, the previous ones. Therefore, Islam says that it is a duty for every Muslim to recognize and respect Jesus, Moses, and all true prophets and their true teachings. This is

repeatedly recorded in the Holy Qur'an:

> "Say: We believe in God and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and to Abraham,
>
> "... and that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and that which was given to the prophets from their Lord. We do not make any distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit." 2:136

The Christians who were in contact with the Muslims in the early days of Islam observed the great respect the Muslims had for Jesus. As a result, millions of them embraced Islam, not because they wanted to abandon the teaching of Jesus, but because they wanted to continue their adherence to his true teaching within the coherent teaching of Islam.

Wilson: Does Islam advocate sending missionaries to convert non-Muslims in a manner similar to that which has been practiced in Christianity?

Chirri: Islam, like Christianity, invites people to its principles and calls upon the non-Muslims to join its followers. However, Islam has never organized missions such as those of Christianity. Whenever a non-Muslim shows an interest in learning about Islam, it is the duty of every Muslim to inform him. Such work, however, is far from being organized missions.

The absence of clergy in Islam was one of the reasons for the absence of organized missions parallel to those of Christianity. Another factor is that a great number of Muslims incline to believe that Islam would spread without missionaries. This inclination was a result of many specta-

cular gains for Islam through no great efforts on the part of the Muslims.

Millions of people in many countries embraced Islam, not through organized missions, but through their contact with some Muslims who impressed them with their integrity and sound principles. Those Muslims imparted the ideas of their faith to the others, not because they were sent by some authorities as missionaries, but because they believed that Islam is every Muslim's business.

I have been in West Africa several times. I found numerous Christian missionaries in that part of the world, but I failed to see any organized Muslim missions. In spite of this, the consensus of the opinions of the informed circles in this field is that Islam is spreading more rapidly than Christianity in that area.

Wilson: Do you have any information about the number of Christian missionaries throughout the world?

Chirri: The number of Christian missionaries throughout the world (according to the *Detroit News* of Sunday, April 2, 1961) is 212,250. This figure includes 170,000 Catholic missionaries and 42,250 Protestant. This huge army of missionaries is supported by thousands of religious organizations who are spending billions of dollars every year on these missions. Compared to this, the Muslims have some information centers whose number throughout the world does not reach one thousand. These centers do not enjoy any of the financial support which the Christian missionaries receive, nor do they aim at converting others. Their work is only to inform, within their limitation, those who seek information about Islam.

Wilson: Some people attribute the spread of Islam to its leniency. They think that Islam is less demanding of its followers than other religions such as Christianity. What is your comment?

Chirri: I think that this opinion is not sound. Islam demands from its followers more than many other religions do. It demands from the Muslims to pray five times a day: before sunrise, at noon, in the afternoon, at sunset, and in the evening. It requires Muslims to fast thirty consecutive days every year during the month of Ramadan. A fasting person is required to refrain from eating, taking any liquid, and smoking from dawn to sunset. Islam requires every physically and financially capable adult to make a pilgrimage to Mecca and all the holy places in it and its vicinity, where men are to renounce all luxuries and materials including sewn clothes for a considerable time.

Islam also requires every Muslim to give a portion of his wealth every year to charity. It prohibits liquor and pork. None of these things are easy, and none of them show a leniency on the part of Islam. Nor is there any leniency in its demanding from its followers to treat others in a brotherly manner, protecting their reputation and refraining from saying anything that may expose them, even those who do them harm.

Wilson: Some critics say that Islam promises the good Muslims a paradise in which they will enjoy everything they may desire. These critics think that Islam out-promises Christianity, and therefore, it is attracting people through its promises.

Chirri: A promise is attractive only if it comes from a

reliable source. If a reputable company offers an individual a well-paying job, he is likely to accept the position. On the other hand, if the same individual is offered a position by an unreliable or a bankrupt firm, he is expected to refuse the offer because he will not have any confidence in the firm's financial reliability.

Similarly, I do not think that a convert would be willing to perform so many duties and renounce so many desirable things for the sake of promises if he does not have the confidence in Islam. No promise is attractive if it is made by an unreliable source. Attractiveness of a promise is a result of confidence. Faith in Islam, therefore, precedes the attractiveness of its promise, not vice versa.

Wilson: History shows that the early Muslims were militant and warriors. Many armed conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims took place in Syria, Egypt, North Africa, Spain, and many other places. Some critics think that Islam was spread by force, and not by preaching and discussion.

Chirri: Force may conquer the body, but it cannot conquer the spirit. You may subdue an individual or community by the use of force, but you cannot make them believe that you are right. The Algerians were dominated by colonial France for about a hundred years, but that did not make them love their rulers. As soon as they had the opportunity, they rose in arms against their masters and broke their yoke.

It is illogical to believe that Islam had spread itself by force. Mohammad, as one person, could not force thousands or hundreds to embrace his faith. History testifies that Mohammad lived thirteen years in Mecca after he proclaimed his faith, under a constant threat from his opponents

who were the overwhelming majority of the Meccans. Anyone that desired to join Islam was denounced, threatened, and persecuted by the Meccans; and, in spite of this, the number of Muslims steadily increased. Can we conceive that Mohammad under these circumstances could convert people by force when he himself was a subject of persecution?

At a later stage, the Muslims had become powerful enough to fight their opponents; and history shows that they did fight for Islam. But this does not mean that Islam had converted people by force. There are now over 100 million Muslims in Indonesia and scores of millions in West Africa. All these millions were converted through peaceful contacts with Muslims who came to these areas as merchants or educators.

There is, however, no reason to deny that Muslims were militant. The Muslims actually were good defenders of their freedom. We know that no ideology would spread or live in an unfree society. Freedom of belief, practice, and speech, are necessary for the growth of any ideology. In the absence of a constitutional protection of freedom, it would be the duty of the people of the ideology to secure their freedom on their own. If this does not justify the military might of the early Muslims, there will be no way to justify the military might of any modern nation that rises in arms to defend its freedom when it is threatened by its adversaries.

INQUIRY /4

How Islam Views the Universal Creation

Wilson: With the progress of science, many questions may arise about the creation of the universe. These questions do not seem to have their answers in the Bible, and sometimes we find some Biblical statements contrary to the scientific knowledge of today. I wonder if we can find answers to some questions in the book of Islam.

The universe now has been proven to be very old. Its age is estimated to be billions of years. It seems that the Bible reduces the age of the universe to just a few thousand years. Does the Holy Qut'an contain any definition of the age of the universe?

Chirri: The Holy Qur'an does not define the age of the universe in anyway. Science so far is not able to tell exactly when the universe began. The Holy Qur'an had been introduced in a non-scientific age when people were not able to conceive the stretch of time into billions or millions of years. Had the Qur'an stated that the stars were originated billions of years ago, people may have rejected the

whole concept of Islam. The Qur'an, therefore, wisely kept silent on this matter. To be true, you do not need to tell all of what you know of truth; you need only to refrain from misinforming the people. Thus, the door was kept open to any scientific theory, so the religious information will not clash with any scientific knowledge.

Wilson: The celestial bodies, the stars, and the planets now are being counted by billions and hundreds of billions. The size of each is tremendous and, sometimes, beyond our imagination. To form such countless bodies, it would take amounts of materials beyond our ability to calculate. Do we, have any statements in the Qur'an on the kind of material out of which these bodies were built?

Chirri: The Holy Qur'an states that the material out of which these bodies were built was a kind of gas. This is in accordance with the modern theory which says that the celestial bodies were built out of hydrogen gas. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "Then He directed Himself to the heaven, and it was a vapor, so He said to it and to the earth: 'Come both of you, willingly or unwillingly.'
> "They both said: 'We come willingly.' " 41:11

Wilson: Does the Holy Qur'an contain any statement about the first material thing that was created?

Chirri: The quoted verse indicates that the vapor or what constitutes the vapor of molecules and atoms was the first material thing which existed in this world.

Wilson: Of what material did the Almighty create life?

Chirri: The Holy Qur'an declares that God has created all living beings out of water:

> "Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the Earth were closed up, so We split them, and We made from water everything living?
>
> "Will they not then believe?" 21:30

> "And God has created every walking life out of water, of them that which crawls upon its belly, and of them is that which walks upon two feet, and of them that which walks upon four.
>
> "God creates what He pleases. Surely God is Possessor of power over all things." 24:45

THE ORDER OF CREATION

Wilson: Does the Qur'an confirm the statement of the Bible which is contained in the Genesis book about the order in the creation of the universe?

Chirri: The Qur'an does not contain such a statement on the order of the creations. However, Muslims do not subscribe to the contents of the first chapter in Genesis book because it shows some discrepancies.

Wilson: Give me some examples of those contradictions to which you refer.

Chirri: Take the following examples:

> 1. "Let there be light; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called

> the light day and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day." Genesis 1:3-5

This statement indicates that the first thing created was the day and night.

But we know that day and night would come after the existence of the sun and through its rise and set. However, verse 14 from the same chapter indicates that the sun was created on the fourth day:

> "And God said, let there be lights in the firmaments of the heavens to separate the day from the night: and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let there be lights in the firmament of heavens to give light upon the earth, and it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning. A fourth day." 1:14-19

This statement indicates that the sun was created on the fourth day, and from here the days should start. This, of course, disagrees with verse 3 which informs us of the start of the day three stages before the formation of the sun.

2. The same chapter states that the vegetations, plants yielding seed, and the fruit trees were created and grown on the third day:

> "And God said, 'Let the Earth put forth vegetables and plant yielding seed and the fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the Earth.
>
> "And it was so. The Earth brought forth vegetation, plants, yielding seed according to their own kinds, and the trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day." 1:11-13

But we know that none of these vegetations and plants could grow without sun, while the same chapter tells us that the sun was created on the fourth day as mentioned before.

3. The same chapter states that God, on the sixth day, created man in His own image:

> "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our own image, after Our likeness; ... So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." 1:26-27

Muslims believe that God has no image and no form. He is the Infinite Who encompasses the whole universe. He has neither a body, nor is He material, nor do the visions comprehend Him. To think that God has a form of a man, to the Muslims, is degrading to the whole concept of God.

4. Chapter two contradicts the first chapter. The first chapter, as you know, has stated that vegetations and plants and the trees were created on the third day, before the creation of man, who was created on the sixth day, The second chapter tells us that man was created before vegetation and plants:

> "These are the generations of the heavens and the Earth when they were created. In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens... when no plant of the field was yet in the Earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up-for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the Earth, and there was no man to till the ground. . . but a mist went up from the Earth and watered the whole face of the ground. . . then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being... And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East; and there He put the man whom He had formed.... And out of, the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Genesis 2:4-9

This statement clearly indicates that there was no plant before the creation of man.

There is another point in this statement, namely, that there is a tree of knowledge of good and evil. But we know that knowledge does not grow on trees; it comes through experience and learning.

5. The first chapter has stated that the animal kingdom was created on the fifth day:

> "And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let the birds fly above the Earth across the firmament of the heavens.' So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which

> the waters swarm, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind; and God blessed them.... And there was evening, and there was morning, a fifth day.... And God made the beasts of the Earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind.... Then God said, 'Let us make man in Our image....'" 1:20-23

This statement clearly indicates that man was created after the creation of fish, birds, beasts and cattle, but the second chapter indicates that man was created before any of these things:

> "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.' So out of the ground the Lord formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. . . .' " 2; 18-19

6. We find in the third chapter of the Genesis that Eve was deceived by the serpent which persuaded her to eat from the prohibited tree:

> "He (the serpent) said to the woman, 'Did God say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'... But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be open....' " 3:1-5

But we know that a serpent is not capable of speaking, deceiving or persuading. A serpent is not endowed with a

mental capacity or ability of pronouncing words and carrying on a conversation.

7. In the same chapter we find what indicates the limitation of the knowledge of God, and that He is a walking body, and that Adam and Eve were able to hide themselves from Him:

> "And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' and he said, 'I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?'. . ." 3:8-11

No one can hide himself from God, Who is Ever-Present and Who knows everything. God does not need to ask Adam where he is, nor does He need to ask Adam if he had eaten from the tree.

INQUIRY /5

The Creator of the Universe

Wilson: I know that the belief in God, the Creator of the Universe, is the first article in the Islamic faith, and that the denial of His existence puts a person outside the religion of Islam. But I do not know whether Islam offers any concrete evidence on the existence of the Supreme Being or whether it advises its followers to rely on the authoritative words of the Qur'an and the statements of the Prophet.

Chirri: Islam demands from its followers to believe in God, the Creator of the Universe, but it does not advise them to base such a belief on the statement of any religious book or any authoritative words, not even the word of the Holy Qur'an or of the holy Prophet. Our belief in a holy book, such as the Qur'an, or in a holy prophet, such as Mohammad, must be preceded by our belief in God. A religious book is holy because it is introduced by a man whom we consider a prophet. Prophethood is conceivable only if there is God, because a prophet is a messenger of

God. Our belief in God, therefore, must come before our belief in a religious book or a prophet, not vice versa.

No religious book is believed by all people, and no prophet is universally recognized. Therefore, it would be futile to rely on an authoritative statement of a prophet or a holy book when dealing with an atheist who disclaims all heavenly revelations and denies the whole concept of God.

Wilson: Should I understand from your statement that Islam offers for substantiating the existence of God some universal evidence which may be considered even by those who are not committed to any religion, such as the atheists and the agnostics? If this is what you mean, what is that evidence?

Chirri: When our belief in God precedes any other religious belief, the evidence which produces such a belief must be universal and available to every rational being, whether committed or uncommitted to a particular religion.

The Holy Qur'an offers the universe as evidence on the existence of its Creator. The material world, its celestial bodies, the earth, and the other planets, are viewed by Islam to be the main evidence of the Creator of matter and energy. The material world is observable by the atheist as well as by the believer, by the illiterate as well as by the philosopher. One may reflect on the formation of the heavenly bodies and the existence of the matter and energy without being committed to any particular religion or recognizing any religious book.

Wilson: But why should a person consider the existence of the material world as evidence of the existence of the creator of matter? Is it not probable that matter existed

without a creator? Suppose someone views that matter or energy is infinitely old, and that it never was preceded by non-existence. Would you be able to disprove his views?

Chirri: It is very hard to accept the idea that matter is infinitely old.

When one says that matter or energy is infinitely old, one assumes that the material out of which the billions of stars were built, existed simultaneously. When we are aware that each star contains billions of tons of materials, and that the balance of the raw material is much more than the material which is contained in the stars and planets, we realize the improbability of such an idea. We cannot conceive that all these quantities of materials existed at once and that nothing of it was preceded by non-existence.

To say that only a portion of the material is infinitely old, and that the other portions came to existence at a later stage, is to admit the need of a creator, because the inanimate material does not increase by self-reproduction. Only living beings are capable of multiplying by self-reproduction. To allow any gradual increase in the material quantity is to admit the need of a creator.

Wilson: I may agree with you that matter and energy must have been preceded by non-existence. But this is not very obvious to every human being. Does the teaching of Islam suggest the consideration of anything in the nature that was undoubtedly preceded by non-existence?

Chirri: Yes, there is something which we all know, and it was born after the existence of the earth, namely: life. Our scientists state that earth was too hot (and some of them say it was too cold) for any kind of life to exist on it. It took the

earth millions of years to become a suitable place for life. Life, therefore, is, undoubtedly, a newborn.

Science, however, tells us that life does not originate from non-living being. Pasteur's experiment, which took place in the 19th century, is still standing. Through his sterilized soup, he proved beyond any doubt that life does not. originate from inanimate material. The scientists of today are still unable to disprove his conclusion.

The earth, along with its atmosphere, at the time of its formation was sterile and unproductive. Transforming the inanimate materials, such as carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium, and iron into a living being could not, therefore, be done through a natural process. It must have been done miraculously. This means that the existence of life on this planet is a shining evidence on the existence of an Intelligent, Supernatural Designer .

Wilson: You have made it very clear. As a matter of fact, the scientists for several decades have tried ceaselessly to unseal the secret of life and to explain its commencement on this planet. But their intensified efforts so far did not produce any substantial knowledge in this field. The presence of life on this planet is, no doubt, a great wonder that could not happen without a supernatural cause. Man has unsealed many secrets in the universe, advanced in his scientific and technical knowledge, and even landed on the moon; but in spite of all this, he is still unable to produce a leaf of a plant or a seed of an apple.

Wilson: Now I would like to ask you if the Qur'an cites the existence of life on our planet in substantiating the existence of God?

Chirri: Yes, the Holy Qur'an does cite the transformation of the inanimate earth elements into living being as a sign of God's existence:

> "... and a sign to them is the dead earth:
> "We made it alive and brought forth from it grain so they eat of it and We made therein gardens of date-palms and grapes, and We made springs to flow forth therein." 36: 33-34

Wilson: So far, you have answered many important questions about the existence of God, but there is one more important question you have not dealt with: Why can we not see God?

Chirri: From our previous discussions, it became clear that the Creator of the universe must be Absolute and Unlimited. He encompasses the whole universe. He is Omnipresent and never absent from anywhere. With His Omnipresence, His visibility is not going to make us believe in Him or know Him. His visibility would be very destructive to us. Before we know Him with His Omnipresence, we would perish. His visibility would be blinding to every human being.

Suppose that the air (which exists only in a very limited space) is visible. It would have a color, and we would not be able to see anything but the air because it fills the atmosphere. Should this be the case, we would not be able to acquire our food or water, nor would we be able to find roads or shelters. If the visibility of the air which exists only in the atmosphere of our little planet would be so blinding and destructive, what would be the case of the visibility of the Creator who encompasses the universe? When we think

of this, we realize how fortunate we are not to be able to see God, our Creator.

Wilson: If the Almighty is Invisible, how can we be sure of His existence? How would an atheist believe in a God whom he cannot see?

Chirri: In order to believe in something, you do not necessarily have to see it. You believe in electricity, yet you cannot see it, You believe in it only because you see its products such as light, heat, etc. If this is sufficient to make you a believer in the existence of electricity, the great universe should be sufficient to every human being to believe in the existence of its Creator.

Wilson: Give me an example other than electricity.

Chirri: Your very existence is a great evidence on the existence of Adam and Eve, or let us say the first two human beings. You did not see Adam and Eve, but you believe that they existed.

To make it more clear: You came through your parents. Your parents came through their parents, and your grandparents came through their parents, and so on. You may continue going back until you reach Adam and Eve. If you deny the existence of the first two human beings, you would be eliminating the first generation of their children. By eliminating the first generation, you eliminate the second and what is beyond it. Finally, you have to eliminate your own parents. Then you have to eliminate yourself. But you say to yourself: I cannot do that because I am here. Then you have to say: Adam and Eve were there.

Wilson: You have made the matter clear. We have to believe in God. But how can we believe that He had no beginning while everything other than Him had a beginning?

Chirri: The Creator of the universe cannot be preceded by non-existence; otherwise, He would need another god to create Him; and that god, if he is preceded by non-existence, would need another god and so on. Thus, we would have an endless chain of gods without reaching a causeless cause to be the source of the existence of the universe. Then we have to deny the existence of the universe. We would also have to deny ourselves because we are a part of the universe.

INQUIRY /6

One Creator

Wilson: You have previously stated that the oneness of God (INQUIRY 2) is the most emphasized theme in the Holy Qur'an; that Islam for this reason is called "Deen Al-Touhid" (the religion of the belief in the oneness of God); and that professing His oneness is the first phrase in the Declaration of the Faith:

> "I bear witness that there is no god but the Almighty God and that Mohammad is a messenger of God."

Does Islam offer any evidence on this important principle?

Chirri: The Holy Qur'an cites the relationship among the sections of the universe as evidence on the unity of its Creator. It advises us to look at the order which exists in the universe, and the fact that such an order could not exist if there were more than One Creator. More than one administration for the universe is like more than one administration

for one city, state, or country. It produces confusion and disorder.

> "If there were in them (the heavens and the Earth) gods besides the Almighty God, they would have been in a state of disorder. Glory be to Him. He is above what they describe." 21:22

> "And know, my son," the Imam Ali, son of AbuTalib, said to his son Al-Hasan, "that if your Lord has a partner, the messengers of His partner would have come to you. But He is only One God, alone without partner." Nahjul Balagha, Part 3, p.44

Wilson: What is the view of Islam on the doctrine of the Trinity?

Chirri: Islam emphatically denies this doctrine. The Holy Qur'an declares:

> "Say: God is One on Whom all depend. He did not beget, nor was He begotten, and none is equal to Him." Qur'an, 112: 1-4

> "And they say the Beneficent has taken to Himself a son. Certainly you make an abominable assertion. The heavens may almost burst, and the Earth cleave asunder, and the mountains fall down in pieces, that they ascribe a son to the Beneficent. And it is not worthy of the Beneficent that He should take to Himself a son" 19:88-92

Wilson: Why does Islam deny so emphatically the doctrine of the Trinity?

Chirri: Islam denies Trinity because parenthood of God to any living or non-living being is inconceivable in bodily terms and degrading to the concept of God. He is neither limited nor a body, and He encompasses the whole universe.

He does not have a mate in order to have a child as any other living being does.

His spiritual parenthood to any soul or spirit is also inconceivable if it means other than being the Creator of that soul or spirit. There is no conceivable relation between God and any other being other than the relation between the Creator and His creature. *Otherwise, the other being will be independent from God; and he will be His partner.*

Now, if the ascribed son is united with God, the case will be as if I state that my son and I are one. If such a statement were true, I would be the father of myself, because I am my own son. And my son would be the son of himself, because he is I. Thus, God would be the father of Himself, and His son would be the son of himself.

God is not, and cannot be, the father of any living or non-living being if fatherhood is used for its true meaning. If the word is used in its figurative sense, to mean that God is as compassionate to His living creature as a father, then He will not only be the father of one person but the father of all mankind. And this is what can be understood from the Christian prayer, "Our father, Thou art in Heaven. . ."

But even this figurative usage of the word is repugnant to Islam because it is misleading and confusing to the people. Muslims, therefore, do not use it.

Wilson: Your statement indicates that the Muslims do not believe in the divinity of Jesus. Do you have any clear evidence against his divinity?

Chirri: You do not need to disprove the divinity of Jesus or Mohammad or any other human being. But if you claim the divinity of anyone besides God, you need to prove your claim. If someone claims that you are an angel, he has to prove it. I do not need to prove that you are a man because you appear as a man and have all the attributes of a man. The one who claims that you are an angel is supposed to prove what he claims, because his claim is contrary to the common sense and to what appears as the actual fact.

When a person says that Jesus or Mohammad is a man, and not a God, he agrees with the accepted definition. Jesus lived like a man, looked like a man, slept as a man, ate as a man, and was persecuted like one. None of these facts need proof. This is not the case with the one who claims his divinity. His claim is opposed to the common knowledge. Therefore, he, and no one else, has to provide the evidence for his claim.

Although the Muslims are not supposed to provide any evidence for the denial of the divinity of Jesus, they can present more than one evidence:

1. Jesus was a worshipper. Of course, he worshipped God, not himself. This proves that he was not a god but a very humble servant of God.

2. According to three of the gospels, the last words Jesus uttered were: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" A person who has a God is not a God.

3. God is Ever-Living, but Jesus is mortal; God is the Almighty, but Jesus was persecuted.

Wilson: Why cannot we view Jesus as a god from his spiritual side and a mortal human from his bodily side?

Chirri: Having two sides, spirit and body, is not the exclusive property of Jesus, because every human being has these two sides. You have both spirit and body, and so do I. And neither of our spirits is mortal, since our spirits will continue to live after our death. But this does not make either of us a god, and so is the case with Jesus.

Wilson: But Jesus is not like us. He, according to the Qur'an and the Bible, was born from a virgin mother without a father. Does not this mean that he is more than a human being?

Chirri: Being born from a mother without a father does not make Jesus more than a human being. Adam was created without father and mother, and that did not make him more than a human. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "Certainly the status of Jesus in the eyes of God is like the status of Adam. He created him from dust. He said to him: 'Be,' and so he was." 3:59

Neither Jesus nor Adam is a god because neither of them is the Creator of the universe.

Wilson: How do we know that he was not the Creator of the universe?

Chirri: The scientists say that the stars are more than four billion years old, and Jesus was born less than two thousand years ago. How can such an old universe be created by such a young creator?

Wilson: You are entirely right, and I think you have made the fact clear enough to convince any fairminded person. Actually, the facts which you have mentioned are well-

known to everyone. It is amazing how people lose sight of them. I think that they do so because they are taught the divinity of Jesus since childhood. This teaching is repeated so much at home and in church that it remains in the children's minds; and when they grow up, it grows as a part of their thinking. They do not question it because it is taken for granted.

From what has been advanced, it has become clear to me that the uncompromising view of Islam on the oneness of God is the most reasonable. Therefore, I bear witness that there is no God but the Almighty God, alone without a partner, associate, or son.

INQUIRY /7

Where Islam and Christianity Agree and Differ on Jesus

Wilson: The whole issue of Islamic monotheism, by your explanation, has become clear. The Islamic teaching concerning Jesus also has been made clear. Now I would like a summary of the points on which Islam and Christianity agree in regard to Jesus.

Chirri: Islam agrees with Christianity, in general, on the following points:

1. Islam advocates the holiness of Jesus. As a matter of fact, it is an essential part of the Islamic teaching to revere Jesus and to believe in his holiness, and that he lived in this world as a pure person free of any sin. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "When the angels said: 'O Mary! Surely God gives thee good news of a word from Him whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, Son of Mary, worthy of regard in this world and the hereafter, and of

those who are highly accepted by God.' " 3:45

2. Islam declares the holiness of Mary, the mother of Jesus. No Muslim can doubt the decency and purity of Mary. She, according to the Qur'an, had been the most noble among the women of the nations:

> "And when the angels said: "O Mary! Certainly God has chosen thee and made thee pure and has preferred thee above the women of all nations.
>
> "'O Mary! Be obedient to thy Lord, prostrate thyself and bow with those who bow (in worship).'" 3:4243

3. Islam declares that Jesus was miraculously born from a virgin mother with no father. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "And mention Mary in the book.
>
> "When she withdrew to a place east of her family."
>
> "She screened herself from them; then We sent to her Our angel, and he appeared to her as a man in all respects."
>
> "She said: 'I seek refuge in God against you if you are righteous."
>
> "He said: 'I am only a Messenger of Thy Lord to grant to you a pure boy.' "
>
> "She said: 'How-can I have a son, and no mortal has yet touched me, nor have I been unchaste?' "
>
> "He said: 'So (it will be). Thy Lord says: "It is easy for Me; and that We may make him a sign to men and a mercy from Us. And it is a matter decreed."

"Then she conceived him; and withdrew with him to a remote place. And the throes of childbirth drove her to the trunk of the palm-tree. She said: 'Oh, would that I had died before this, and had been a thing quite forgotten."

"So a voice came to her from beneath her: 'Grieve not, surely thy Lord has provided a stream beneath thee. And shake towards thee the trunk of the palm-tree, it will drop on thee fresh ripe dates. So eat and drink and be pleased. Then if thou seest any human, say: "Surely I have vowed a fasting for the sake of the Beneficent, so I will not speak to any human today." 19: 16-26

4. The Qur'an attributes to Jesus many of the miracles which are mentioned in the Gospel. According to the Holy Qur'an, Jesus was empowered by God to cure the sick, revive the dead, and make the blind see:

". . . and He (God) will make him (Jesus) a messenger to the children of Israel (saying):

" 'I have come to you with a sign from your Lord that I fashion for you, out of clay, the likeness of a bird, and I breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by permission of God. I heal him who was born blind, and the leper, and I raise the dead by permission of God. And I announce unto you what ye eat and what ye store in your houses.

" 'Lo! Herein verily is a sign for you, if ye are to be believers.' " 3:49

In addition to this, the Holy Qur'an ascribes to Jesus a miracle that is not recorded in the gospels: Jesus spoke

clearly while he was in the cradle:

> "Then she came to her people with him, carrying him. They said: 'O Mary, thou hast indeed brought a strange thing. O sister of Aaron, thy father was not a wicked man, nor was thy mother an unchaste Woman.'
>
> "But she pointed to him. They said: 'How should we speak to a one who is a child in the cradle?'
>
> "He said: 'I am indeed a servant of God. He has given me the Book and made me a prophet; and He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and purity so long as I live. And to be kind to my mother; and He has not made me insolent, unblessed. And Peace be on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I am raised to life.(in the Hereafter).' " 19: 27-33

Wilson: The points of agreement, by your explanations, have become clear. I know that the followers of various religions have differed on the issue of Jesus Christ. Some of them can be considered anti-Jesus because they deny his holiness and the holiness of his mother, disbelieve in his miracles and reject his truth; some of them are neutral, neither for nor anti-Jesus; and some of them are pro-Jesus, believing in his holiness and accepting all his teachings and believing in his miracles.

According to your explanation, Muslims ought to be considered pro-Jesus, as well as the Christians themselves. What remains now is to see the points in which the Muslims and the Christians disagree concerning Jesus.

Chirri: The area of disagreement between Islam and Christianity, concerning Jesus, includes the following points:

1. Although Islam accepts the holiness of Jesus, it denies his divinity. According to the teaching of Islam, Jesus is no deity. He is not God, nor is he united with God. He is worthy of reverence and great respect, but he is not worthy of worship. Islam is uncompromising in its Monotheism. God is only One, and there is no God but He, the Almighty, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent, the Infinite in life, knowledge, and power. Jesus is not ever-living. He was born less than 2000 years ago, and according to the gospels, he died after a very short life. He is not almighty because he was a subject of persecution; nor was he infinite. He could not be the Creator of the world because the world is over four billion years old, while he was born less than two thousand years ago. He is not worthy of worship because he himself was a humble worshipper of God.

2. Jesus, according to the teaching of Islam, is not a son of God. God does not have any son or child, because He is above that. Bodily parenthood is inconceivable in His case because He is not physical. Spiritual parenthood also is not conceivable, because He is the Creator of every spiritual and material being. The Holy Qur'an is clear on this point:

> "And (they) impute falsely, without knowledge, sons and daughters unto Him. Glorified be He and high exalted above (all) that they ascribe (unto Him). The Originator of the heavens and the Earth! How can He have a child when there is no consort for Him, when He created all things and is Aware of all things? Such is God, your Lord. There is no God save Him, the Creator of all things, so worship

Him. And He taketh care of all things." 6:100-102

3. Islam denies the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus did not die on the cross. The Holy Qur'an is clear on this point.

> "And because of their saying: 'We slew the Messiah Jesus Son of Mary, the Messenger of God.'
>
> "They slew him not nor crucified him, but appeared so unto them; and lo! Those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof but the pursuit of a conjecture; for certain they slew him not, but God took him up to Himself. God is Ever-Mighty, Wise." 4:157-158

Wilson: This view is in a sharp contrast with the statements of all the gospels. The four gospels clearly state that Jesus died on the cross. How can we reconcile this with the statement of the Qur'an which denies emphatically the death of Jesus on the cross?

Chirri: There is a way to reconcile the Qur'anic statement with the statements of the gospels: The difference between the two statements could be a difference between appearance and reality. No doubt, some event had taken place at the time of what seemed to be the crucifixion of Jesus and his death on the cross. The life of Jesus was full of miracles, and so could be what seemed to be his death. It could have been that another person (such as Judas, the one who betrayed him) was miraculously likened to him, and he, not Jesus, died on the cross.

There is another way to reconcile the two statements

without resort to assumption of any miracle: Suppose Jesus was put on the cross, and that he had fainted, so he appeared dead, while he was still alive.

This assumption is not without evidence from the gospels: The gospels state that Jesus did not stay very long on the cross. He was taken down hurriedly, without breaking his legs, while it was the custom to break the legs of the crucified. The Jews were preparing to celebrate Passover. They did not want him to stay on the cross until the next day, Saturday, on which they are not supposed to do any work such as burial. As Jesus did not stay too long on the cross, he could have remained alive.

The gospels state also that after Jesus appeared to be dead, a man struck at his body with a lance, and that the blood gushed out from his body. We know that blood does not flow from a dead body. This indicates that Jesus was still alive.

The gospels state that Jesus was laid in his tomb, and that a heavy stone was laid above the tomb, and that on Sunday, the body was missing, and that the stone was removed from the mouth of the tomb. We have the right to suspect that some of the disciples of Jesus removed the stone and rescued him. Were Jesus resurrected miraculously, there would have been no need for removal of the stone. God is able to raise him from the grave and keep the stone where it was. The removal of the stone seems to be a human, and not a Divine, work.

In addition to this, the gospels state that Jesus appeared several times to his disciples after the event of crucifixion. All these appearances seemed to have taken place in secrecy, and that Jesus was not willing to appear openly. Were he

miraculously resurrected, he would not have had to hide from his enemies. The secrecy of his appearances indicates that he was still living as he did before, and that his life was not interrupted by a short death, and that he was still afraid of the pursuit of his enemies.

The international society of the Holy Shroud has recently concluded that the stains of blood on the shroud of Jesus indicate that Jesus was still living when he was taken down from the cross. Otherwise, there would be no blood on the sheet which covered his body afterwards.

A Christian, believing in the crucifixion of Jesus, would have a hard time reconciling two of the principles in which he believes, namely: Jesus is God, and Jesus was crucified. A crucified person cannot be God because he is unable to protect himself, let alone be almighty.

A Muslim, on the other hand, does not have such a problem. He believes that Jesus is a prophet and no more. A prophet may be persecuted and crucified, because a prophet is not supposed to be almighty. Although Islam does not have the problem of contradiction, it has solved the problem which it does not have. Jesus was not crucified. God had protected him.

4. Islam disagrees with Christianity on the Doctrine of Redemption. The Doctrine of Redemption is based on the Doctrine of the Original Sin: that mankind had been condemned by God because of the sin of Adam and Eve which was consequently inherited by their children. Islam denies the whole Doctrine of the Original Sin; God did not condemn mankind because a sin was committed by a couple at the beginning of time. (This will be made clear in the following inquiry.) There is no original sin; therefore, there is

no need for redemption to mankind out of a sin that did not exist.

Furthermore, suppose that there is an original sin. To forgive mankind their original sin, God does not need a sinless person, such as Jesus, to be crucified. He can forgive the human race without causing an innocent person to suffer. To say that God does not forgive mankind unless mankind crucifies Jesus, is to put Him in the position of a ruler who was disobeyed by his own subjects. When the children asked the ruler to forgive the sin of their fathers, he refused to do so unless they kill one of his beloved ones. If they commit such a terrible crime, he will forgive them; otherwise, he will not. I do not think that the advocates of the original sin would be willing to put God in such a position. God, the Most Just and Merciful, does not condemn people because of their ancestor's sin. He may forgive them their own sins without requiring them to commit a bigger one.

INQUIRY /8

Divine Justice

Wilson: I know that the Holy Qur'an is clear on certain attributes of God such as The Merciful, The Wise, The Benevolent, the Ever-Living, the Creator of the universe, the One without a partner, associate, or son. But I would like to know if The "Just" is one of the attributes of God. I was told by some Muslims that it is one of His attributes, and by some others that it is not.

Chirri: No logical religion can afford to deny or doubt the justice of God and His fairness. To deny His justice is to undermine the religious concept entirely. No religious belief, not even the belief in the existence of the Supreme Being, would avail us without the belief in His justice.

An unfair ruler may reward the wrongdoer and penalize the good doer. If one obeys him, he will not necessarily secure his satisfaction. If one disobeys him, he will not be certain that he is out of his favor .

Furthermore, we believe in heavenly messages and God's messengers because we think that He is fair enough to tell

His human servants what He wants from them. But an unfair God may not tell us anything or may tell us something He does not mean to tell. By this, the whole doctrine of prophethood will collapse.

Denial of the justice of God would also lead to denial of the Hereafter, because the Hereafter is the world of carrying out justice by rewarding the good doers and punishing the wrongdoers.

In short, the concept of justice of God, to us, is as important as the concept of His existence and His oneness; and the denial of it is as destructive to religion as the denial of the existence of God or of His oneness. Therefore, the concept of justice of God ought to be considered part of the foundation of religion without which no religion can logically be established.

Islam is entirely in accord with this sound and logical thinking. The Holy Qur'an states the justice of God as emphatically as it states the oneness of God and His existence. In scores of passages, injustice has been denounced. In many passages, God is described as just, or that He does not want to do injustice to His servants, or that He will not waste the deed of any doer, or that He will not cause anyone to lose one atom's weight of good.

> "The Almighty bears witness that there is no god but He, and (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge, (He is) maintaining justice. There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise." 3:18

> "So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it (on the Day of Judgment), and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it." 99:7-8

Wilson: Your statement about the justice of God is one of the most reasonable statements I have ever heard. In fact, the importance of this religious doctrine cannot be exaggerated because the concept of God without His justice will not benefit us. We can neither trust nor please an unjust god. Judaism and Christianity share with Islam the same view, and no Christian or Jew doubts the justice of God and His fairness. The Doctrine of Justice of God, therefore, is Christian and Jewish as well as Islamic, and I do not see any difference among the three faiths in this respect.

Chirri: The difference between Islam and the other faiths in this respect is not about the concept of justice of God itself, but about the concepts which stem from this doctrine. Islam does not subscribe to any doctrine that contradicts the concept of the Divine Justice. Islam preaches and upholds all doctrines that may stem from the concept of the justice of God.

Wilson: Will you cite some of these doctrines which stem from the justice of God?

Chirri: I shall cite three of these principles which stem from the doctrine of Divine justice:

1. God does not ask His human creature to do what he cannot do. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "God does not impose on a soul a duty but to the extent of its ability." 2:286

What is beyond your power is impossible for you. The Just God does not ask the impossible.

2. God does not hold any individual responsible but for his own deed which is under his control. No one is res-

ponsible for the deeds of others, even if they are his friends or relatives, as long as their action is not under his control. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "Shall I seek a lord other than God while He is the Lord of everything, and no soul earns (evil) but against itself. Nor does a bearer of a burden bear the burden of another. Then to your Lord is your return, so He will inform you of that in which you differed." 6: 164

3. If this is true, the human race could not be burdened by the action of Adam and Eve. To say that the whole human race is burdened with the heredity of the improper action of Adam and Eve is to say that the thousands of human generations share with Adam and Eve the responsibility of their action, and that they are condemned by God for a mistake which occurred before the birth of any of those generations. This, of course, is inconsistent with God's justice.

A human judge does not condemn a son for the sin of his parents which he did not share. How can we conceive that the Just God places the iniquity of the parents on their children or their great-grandchildren?

Therefore, Islam emphatically denies the Doctrine of the Original Sin, and considers every human being pure at the time of his birth and free of any sin. Actually, Islam offers the human infant as a perfect example of a pure and sinless being. Every human being, according to the teachings of Islam, is born pure and free of any sin and continues to be pure until he commits a sin as an adult.

By sinning at the age of adulthood, the individual loses his purity, but a person can regain it through a sincere repentance. When a person genuinely changes his attitude

and sincerely intends not to repeat his sin, and truly pledges obedience to God, the Most Merciful will forgive and erase the sin.

Wilson: Let me digress for a moment: Adam and Eve were individuals like us. Let us assume that they repented sincerely after they made a mistake. Does that mean that their mistake was erased?

Chirri: If you assume that Adam had repented after he did the improper, you will not be wrong. Nor will you be mistaken if you believe that Adam was forgiven by God upon his repentance. The Holy Qur'an informs us that the Most Merciful accepted the repentance of Adam, and by this, the action of Adam was forgiven:

> ". . . and Adam received from his Lord words, and He relented towards him. Lo! He is the Relenting, the Merciful." 2:37

Wilson: If Adam was forgiven, why was he expelled from the paradise of God?

Chirri: The fall of Adam from paradise is not necessarily a punishment for a sin. It may be a necessary result of the change of his status. At the beginning, Adam was worthy of communicating with God at any time, and this was his bliss and paradise. By acting improperly, he became susceptible to slip again; that is, he had lost his immunity from impropriety: So unimmuned, he was no longer in such a high position that enables him to communicate with his Lord at any time. Now he is able to do so only at the time of his firm purity. His firm purity, of course, is no longer permanent as it was before he slipped, because he may slip once again.

Wilson: The Old Testament informs us that the sin of Adam was his eating from a tree, and that that tree was the tree of knowledge which God told him to avoid. What is the version of the Qur'an of this subject?

Chirri: The Holy Qur'an states that there was a prohibited tree and that the mistake of Adam was his eating from it. But the Qur'an is not specific on its kind. Knowing the logical spirit of Islam, I am sure that the tree was not a tree of knowledge because knowledge comes from learning and experience, and it does not grow on trees. There might have been no significance attached to the tree or its kind in the whole issue. The significant matter could have been the prohibition itself which God decreed to test the will of His servants Adam and Eve. Furthermore, God, according to the Holy Qur'an, loves knowledge; how would He forbid it?

Wilson: Let us end our digression and go back to the subject.

I am now convinced that Islam stands on a solid ground in preaching the purity of the human race and that its teaching in this field is very sound and consistent. It has, so far, adhered to the principle of justice of God and upheld the principle of the individual's responsibility which is inseparable from the justice of God.

When the Christians preach the Doctrine of the Original Sin, they actually construct a base to another doctrine, namely: the Doctrine of Redemption. Mankind, they say, is sinful and condemned because of the original sin. In other words, by inheriting the sin of Adam and Eve, we became sinful; therefore, we need to be redeemed in some way.

Someone should pay for our sin. Jesus paid for it by being crucified. Thus, Jesus became the redeemer and the saviour of mankind.

By the denial of the original sin, the Doctrine of Redemption is left without foundation. You have already spoken on the subject, but now it has become clear that the Doctrine of Redemption is one of the principles which are not in accord with the concept of the justice of God.

Chirri: The whole issue of the Original Sin is, as we advanced, entirely opposed to the justice of God. Even if we forget about its inconsistency with His justice, we cannot conceive that the Most Just makes one person, an innocent person, Jesus, pay for the sin of the whole human race. Again, how can we wash a small sin, such as eating any apple, by the most terrible sin, the murder of a holy person, such as Jesus. Sin may, conceivably, be washed by a good deed, not by murder. Furthermore, how can we conceive that God, the Most Wise, would demand the blood of His dear messenger as a price of forgiveness?

INQUIRY /9

Freedom versus Predestination

Wilson: There is an important issue which has a bearing on the concept of the Divine justice, and it is highly controversial in philosophy as well as religion; namely: man's freedom. The philosophers as well as the religious scholars differ on this question. Some of them advocate man's freedom, and that whatever he does he does by his free will; some of them deny this freedom, and think that what appears to be a free action or inaction of man is prearranged or a result of a certain cause or chain of causes.

I have read in some Islamic literature that Islam advocates predestination, and that all man's works were predestined by God, and that man cannot change the courses which he takes. I read, also, a different Islamic view which advocates man's freedom and denies the concept of predestination in man's action or inaction. I would like now to discuss with you this question and find out what Islam, actually, teaches in this important issue.

Chirri: To define the subject of our discussion, it would

be necessary to make clear that our discussion does not include certain conditions not caused by man's own will, such as sickness, blindness, and death. In this area the absence of man's freedom is obvious. No one should claim that man has freedom in having such conditions, because these things do not come by man's choice. Our discussion includes only the area of man's work and action where man seems to be acting by his own choice and will. It is here that the old controversy is still burning and dividing the people into two camps: the camp which advocates man's freedom, and the camp which advocates predestination or Determinism.

Islam, as you know, informs us that God has revealed certain commandments; that He will reward the obedients of His commandments; and that He will punish the disobedients who do not comply with these commandments. A religion which preaches this can be consistent only if it advocates man's freedom, unless such a religion denies the concept of justice of God.

A religion that advocates both God's justice and predestination would clearly contradict itself when it states that God will reward the obedient of His commands and penalize the disobedient. When man's actions or inactions are pre-arranged by God, man will be unable to change his course. He will not be able to do one thing when he is predestined to do something else. Man would be like a machine. A machine is not able, by itself, to change its course, and it would be ridiculous to tell a machine to comply with a certain order or to reward a machine or penalize it.

Remove man's freedom, and the whole concept of

religion is destroyed. As a matter of fact, if we deny man's freedom, there will be no need for any heavenly revelation. It would be futile to send prophets to teach and lead mankind. When a person is predestined to be an atheist, he shall not be a believer, and no prophet will be able to change his heart. A predestined criminal is not going to be a good citizen, regardless of any teaching he may receive.

Man's freedom, in fact, underlies the whole concept of religion, and Islam clearly advocates man's freedom.

Wilson: From our past discussions, I know that Islam advocates strongly the Doctrine of the Justice of God. Islam, therefore, is expected to advocate man's freedom and oppose the idea of predestination or what is called, in philosophy, "Determinism." I would like to know if the Holy Qur'an indicates man's freedom clearly.

Chirri: The Holy Qur'an has indicated, in more than one way, that man is a free agent. It declares that man is capable of changing his condition.

> "Surely the Almighty changes not the condition of a people unless they change that which is in themselves." 13: 11

Were man predestined to take a certain course, he would not be able to change that course. Whatever he does or avoids will be done or avoided, not by choice, but by necessity.

The Holy Qur'an has, also, declared that God does not ask the individual to do the impossible, nor does He place hardship on His servants:

> "The Almighty imposes not on a soul a duty

> but to the extent of its ability." 2:286
>
> "The Almighty desires not to place a hardship on you but He desires to purify you and to complete His favor upon you, so that you may be thankful." 5:8

For example, if man were predestined not to pray or to commit a murder and God tells him not to kill or to pray, He will be placing the greatest hardship on him, and He will be asking him to do what is impossible for him. He will not be asking him to do what is within his ability because he was predestined, before he was born, to kill and not to pray. Thus, He would not be able to comply with the order of God. The very fact that he is commanded to pray and prohibited from killing indicates that God views His human servant as a free creature, and that whatever he is commanded to do or not to do is within his ability.

The Holy Qur'an has, also, indicated man's freedom by stating and stressing the responsibility of every individual for what he does:

> "Whoever goes aright, for his own soul he goes aright; and whoever goes astray, to his own detriment he goes astray." 39:41
>
> "And no bearer of a burden bears another's burden. . . ." 53:38
>
> "Say: O people, the truth has come to you from your Lord; So whoever goes aright, goes aright only for the good of his own soul: and whoever errs, he errs only against it." 10:108

The very concept of responsibility of the individual

indicates clearly that the individual is a free agent. Otherwise, he cannot be held responsible for anything that may be produced by him. Responsibility is inseparable from freedom.

Wilson: The verses which you have quoted from the Holy Qur'an truly indicate that man is endowed with a sufficient amount of freedom that makes him responsible and deserving of reward or punishment for his work. However, there are some verses which were quoted from the Qur'an by the advocates of predestination. These verses indicate that man's action is controlled by God. Of these verses are the following:

> "Surely this (the Qur'an) is a reminder; so, whoever is willing, he may take a path to his Lord. And you do not will unless God wills. . . ." 76:29-30
>
> "It is naught but thy trial. Thou causest to err thereby whomever Thou pleasest and guidest whomever Thou pleasest. . . . " 7:155

These verses indicate the opposite of what the verses which you quoted indicate. This leads to confusion and creates a dilemma.

Chirri: To a Muslim, the Holy Qur'an is the accurate record of revelation. It contains only the truth, and all the contents of the Holy Qur'an must be true. A truth never contradicts another truth. Whatever may seem to be a contradiction could not be genuine. It would only be an apparent contradiction.

When there are two groups of Qur'anic verses appearing

to oppose each other, they have to be treated in a certain manner. When one of the groups has a clearer indication on one side of the issue than the indication of the other group on the opposite side of the same issue, the clearer group will be followed. The other group ought to be interpreted in a way that will not disagree with the first one. This treatment would be obviously necessary when the clearer group is in accordance with the logical side of the issue. And this is the case in the two above quoted groups.

Keeping this in mind, we may be able to understand the two groups and interpret the latter one in a way that it would not disagree with the former. We may understand from the first of the two verses in the second group that man's ability to choose is from God. Man may choose a certain course but his capability of choosing is the gift of God. God is able to deprive him from this capability and interfere in His will. But God does not usually do that.

The second of the two verses, also, can be interpreted in a way that will not disagree with man's freedom: God may guide an individual to the right path, and He may leave another individual in error. But we cannot expect God to grant guidance to someone and to leave another in error on a random basis.

He may help a person by granting him a clear guidance when such a person is trying to find the truth and willing to follow it. He may leave a person in error when that person is not willing to accept the truth. By this interpretation, there will be no dilemma. The first group of verses would remain without opposition, indicating clearly man's freedom.

Wilson: God is the Creator of the whole universe, all its segments and all its events. No event in this world is out-

side His creation. Man's will is one of the events which take place in this world. Man, therefore, has no free will.

Chirri: If this is true, we have to ascribe to God all the injustices, aggressions and crimes which man commits. But no believer in God would ascribe to Him our vices and sins.

The truth is that God has created in man the power of choosing, and this means that He granted him a free will. God can direct man's will and make him choose a certain course if He wants to, but nothing in our life indicates that God usually interferes in our will. Since He granted us the power of choosing, we should expect Him to leave us without intervention. This means that He expects us to use our power of choosing and make our own decisions and have our own choices.

Wilson: God knows our future as well as our present and past. He knows what I shall do in the distant future as well as what I am doing right now. He knew before we were born what course we would take after our birth and in the future. Since everything is known to Him in advance, our action must have been predetermined long before we act.

We would be unable to take a new course that is not known to God, nor can we fail to take the course which has been foreseen by Him. Our failure to take the very course which He knew, would be a failure in His knowledge. The knowledge of God never fails.

Chirri: our knowledge of certain events does not determine those events, nor does our knowledge cause those events to happen. I know, for example, that all the workers at a particular factory eat their lunch at noon. This does not mean that my knowledge or expectation has caused them to

take their lunch at that time. God, no doubt, foresees our future, but this does not necessarily mean that all our future actions are caused by His knowledge. Each and every one of our actions has its own cause, and the main factor is the particular human will which calls for such an action.

In addition to this, God knows that I will do a certain thing by my own free will. Since the knowledge of God does not fail, my action has to be a free action caused by my free will. Should my action prove to be a product of compulsion. the knowledge of God would fail. The knowledge of God never fails; therefore, I will not fail to make my own decision, by my own free will.

Wilson: This discussion has made the issue entirely clear. The last point which you stated is very important. As a matter of fact, the last argument which I introduced confuses the knowledge of an event with its cause, but every event usually has its own cause. We know that God knows that every particular action of ours is to be the product of our own will. And since God has given us the power of choosing, our will must be a free product of that power. The knowledge of God will never fail. Therefore, we will not fail to have our actions as the products of our own free will.

When we subscribe to the doctrine of man's freedom, we will be consistent and safe from contradiction. The Doctrine of the Justice of God could not be reconciled with the Doctrine of Predestination. We cannot say that man's action is necessitated by God, unless we deny the Divine justice. Since we are not willing to give up the Doctrine of the Justice of God, nor are we willing to believe in contradiction, we have to deny, categorically, the Doctrine of Predestination.

INQUIRY /10

A Light on the History of the Prophethood

Wilson: The history of the monotheistic religions shows that all their prophets came from the semitic race and that most of them came from the descendants of the Prophet Abraham, either from the children of Isaac or from the children of Ishmael. This might be construed as a privilege by which the Israelites and the Ishmaelites were distinguished from the rest of mankind. But it is very difficult to believe that God would present only these two communities with the heavenly message. God is the Lord of all nations and His message should have been revealed to other nations as well. If the history of religion is correct, there must be some reason for confining the prophethood to these two communities.

Chirri: The history of the human race shows us that the human understanding, in the early times, was incapable of rising above the sensuous surroundings, or of conceiving the high and universal ideas. As for human interactions, the individual was limited to love of family and friendship

of relatives. All other tribes were strange or gentile to him. National and humane concepts rarely took place in his thinking.

However, some gifted individuals had lived among those people and were capable of profound understanding and rising above the sensuous limitation and ready to take the responsibility of guiding and teaching. Knowing their unusual capacities, the Most Benevolent revealed to them the truth and commissioned them with the hardest task, the guidance of humanity.

These individuals were chosen for their own merits, not for their relation to a particular race or community. As expected, these individuals were confronted with insurmountable difficulties. People were not ready to follow or accept their teachings, and most of them were either like Noah who gained a very small number of followers, or like Abraham, who lived almost as a prophet without followers.

As society refused to change, it is presumed that a prophet like Abraham was required to try to secure the continuity of his religion through his children, Ishmael and Isaac, who faithfully followed the faith of their father and conveyed it to their children. The religious teaching continued to spread narrowly through a tribal line. Centuries elapsed, and the faith neither gained followers from outside, nor was it believed by all the descendants of Abraham.

The heavenly purpose, however, was not to, confine the faith within tribal or national borders. The Most Merciful and Compassionate planned to spread the faith throughout the world and to show all mankind the right path. The Almighty administers the universe through the usual and natural courses and subjects all the events of the world to

the law of cause and effect. He preserved the revealed faith and kept it alive, though at a standstill, through a small Community, which was blessed by inheriting that faith from its holy father. He caused that faith to inflame and spread when that community grew and acquired a power adequate to the great task of spreading the faith.

That small community was destined to grow through two lines, the Ishmaelite and the Israelite. Both of them were blessed and both were tested and commissioned with the great task of preserving and spreading the faith, but the two tests were not simultaneous. Though Ishmael was the first son of Abraham and acquired a heritage of faith and blessing like that of his brother Isaac, God put off the test of his descendants for many centuries. He was preparing them to continue the mission which the descendants of Isaac had started.

To begin with the line of Isaac, the Almighty God established a covenant with him. From the Old Testament:

> "As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him and make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But, I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year."
> Genesis, Chapter 21

Wilson: According to your statement, the heavenly purpose was not to confine the faith to one or two communities or nations but to spread the true faith throughout the world and to introduce the heavenly principles to all nations. This, however, does not seem to be the case. The Old Testament

repeatedly calls the Israelites God's chosen people. It calls the other people gentiles. This shows that the Israelites were the main concern of the heavenly message.

Chirri: With the covenant which was established between God and Isaac, the children of Israel were supposed to embrace and follow sincerely the heavenly instructions and to lead the rest of the nations to the path of God. But the Israelites did not live up to this expectation. Only a small minority adhered to the heavenly teaching and that minority was incapable of conceiving the faith as universal or humane.

As a result, the successive prophets of Israel spoke to their people according to their understanding. Under the circumstances, the faith was characterized as tribal or national; God is God of Israel, and the Israelites are His chosen people. The prophets had endeavored to make the Hebrew community adhere to the faith sincerely. All the prophets of Israel were concerned mainly with that community, and none of the gentile nations concerned them. Even the great Jesus, according to Matthew, had the same attitude:

> "Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Cana-an came out of the same coasts. And cried unto him, saying, have mercy on me, O Lord, thou the son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. . . But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, it is not meet

to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs."
Matthew, Chapter 15

Wilson: The Bible informs us that God had ordered Abraham to harken to Sarah, his wife, and to cast Ishmael in the desert of Paran, where there was neither food nor water. This does not only seem to be unmerciful, but also suggests that God did not have any purpose in Ishmael and his children.

Chirri: The preparation of the Ishmaelites had been started since God advised His obedient servant Abraham to hearken to his wife, Sarah, by taking Ishmael and his mother Hagar away to the wilderness of Paran. The readers of the Old Testament are entitled to wonder about the wisdom of such advice which seems to be very merciless and ruthless. But when we ponder on the subsequent events which took place in history, we may understand the wisdom.

The task of spreading a true religion is the task of transforming the characters of the individuals and changing the lives of the nations. The first thing this task encounters is a disagreement between the teacher of the new ideology and those whom he attempts to influence. Such an attempt usually meets resistance, and it is not unusual for this resistance to lead to an armed conflict. In such a case, the freedom to believe, preach, and practice is threatened, and can be secured and protected only when the camp of the new ideology is ready to accept the challenge and meet violence with violence. The mission, then, needs a heavenly leader supported by a strong, brave and obedient community which is ready to make any sacrifice without hesitation.

From all nations of the Middle East, the Arab nation,

for many centuries, had been distinguished and, therefore, qualified for such a performance. The Arabian Peninsula had remained inaccessible to invaders and unsubdued by any foreign power. The individual Arab had enjoyed a freedom rarely checked by rulers. He became self-confident, ready to protect himself and his freedom by his own power and to translate his will into action. A nation composed of such individuals is qualified to carry a great mission; and when it is inspired by a heavenly leader, it would be capable of performing wonders.

To impart the religion of Abraham to that strong and brave nation and to prepare that nation for its great destiny, the Almighty advised His servant Abraham to hearken to his wife, Sarah, by sending his son Ishmael away so he may dwell among the Arabs. Through intermarriage, the descendants of Ishmael were to be united with the Arabs and become a great nation that was destined to bear the great mission in the future.

> "And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her: What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him into thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness. . . and he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran." Genesis, Chapter 21.

By placing Ishmael in the Arabian Peninsula, Abraham had planted the seed of his faith in the Arabian soil. To

make the seed grow and the faith continue, he laid the foundation of the future by raising the foundation of the Sacred House, the Kaabah in the midst of Arabia, as the first temple of God in the world. As God foretold Abraham and as Abraham expected, the House attracted the dwellers of Arabia and became the holy center of the country. The holy city of Mecca later was established around it, and since then the call of Abraham is annually responded to by a large number of pilgrims who visit the Sacred House and worship God at His temple. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "And when We pointed to Abraham the place of the House, saying: 'Associate naught with Me, and purify My House for those who make circuits and stand to pray and bow and prostrate themselves. And proclaim to men the pilgrimage; they will come to thee on foot and every lean camel, coming from every remote path; that they may witness benefits (provided) for them, and mention the name of God on appointed days over what He has given them of the cattle quadrupeds; then eat of them and feed the distressed one, the needy." 22:26-28

It was heart-rending to Abraham, to settle his first son in the desert of Arabia where there is neither fruit nor water nor town. But he had two goals to accomplish, and each was great enough to make Abraham willing to offer such a sacrifice and to do his utmost.

The first of the two goals was immediate, namely: to establish the Sacred House and to assign to that mosque his son as a guardian who would worship God, conduct the service according to the true religion of God, and teach his children and the people of the country the right principles.

By this, Abraham not only widened the scope of his faith but also assured the continuity of that faith. Should the line of Isaac fail in its religious task, the faith may continue through the children of Ishmael in Arabia. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "My Lord, I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive of fruit near Thy Sacred House, Our Lord, that they may keep up prayer; so make the hearts of some people yearn towards them, and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful." 14:37

We do not know the extent of growth of Abraham's faith on the soil of Arabia. History does not inform us clearly on the religious situation in Arabia during the long period which extends from the time of Abraham to the end of the fifth century of the Christian era. In the sixth century we find the majority of the Arabs idolaters. But in spite of this, we find, at the same time, some rites and practices which could be attributed only to the teaching of Abraham. Among these are the pilgrimage to the Sacred House in Mecca and the circumcision which was performed and practiced by all the non-Christian tribes of Arabia. Along with these rites and practices, we find a small minority among the Arabs, believing in God, worshipping Him, and rejecting idols.

The second goal for Abraham was to prepare the children of Ishmael and the nation with which they were united, for the distant and glorious future- when the Arabic-speaking people would be privileged and honored to have the Final Prophet among them; when they would be ready to receive his great message and spread the word of God

throughout the world. From the Qur'an:

> "And when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House (with this prayer):
>
> "Our Lord, accept(this service) from us; surely Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. ,
>
> "Our Lord, and make us both submissive to Thee, and (raise) from our offspring, a nation submissive to Thee, and show us our way of devotion and turn to us (mercifully); surely Thou art the oft-returning (to mercy) the Merciful.
>
> "Our Lord, and raise up in them a messenger from among them who shall recite to them Thy messages and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them. "Surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise." 2:127-129

The prayer of the Prophet Abraham was graciously answered in the seventh century A.D. The anticipated Prophet had arrived with an unprecedented method of presentation which is capable of supporting the truth, securing the needed freedoms and opening the way for the heavenly doctrines. It is the method of using logic as the main means for convincing and displaying strength in the face of anyone who threatened the sacred freedoms.

Yes, in the seventh century, the world was blessed by the advent of the Final and Universal Prophet Mohammad, who rose from Mecca, the center of Arabia, to shine over the East and the West.

INQUIRY /11

Why Do We Need Prophets?

Wilson: Why does mankind need to have a prophet or a messenger from God? Man is endowed with a mental ability by which he can distinguish between right and wrong. One can say that there is no need for heavenly guidance to tell him what to do or not to do. The average individual is able to conduct himself sensibly, so he may deal with others and with his own family in a rational way without any need for Divine law.

Chirri: The prophethood is needed for many reasons:

1. THERE IS A NEED TO REMIND PEOPLE OF GOD

Theoretically, man is capable of deducing the existence of the Creator through his observation of God's creations on earth. The free human mind is capable of comprehending abstractions and universal ideas. Because of our biological appetites or needs, we are closely bound to the material world. The material attractions of the world divert the best of

us. The average person does not seem to be capable of a detached comprehension of his Maker. Nor can we expect the average man to divorce himself from the material things in the world to think clearly about God.

Moreover, the wondrous regulation of the universe implies the existence of an Orderer, the Almighty God. But man is too engrossed in his petty concerns to notice natural laws, let alone think of their origins. Man has become too accustomed to the sun rising in the east to think about why it does. Mankind falls short of the important recognition of the Creator. The universal recognition of His existence by man is not the result of common thinking but due to the teachings of some gifted individuals who succeeded in leading mankind to this conclusion.

2. THERE IS A NEED FOR AN INCONTROVERTIBLE AUTHORITY

People differ in education, abilities, feelings and backgrounds; so they differ in their views. Many important issues concerning man's actions are highly controversial among individuals and groups. Ethics and morals are strongly disputed. Philosophic justifications can be found for almost any viewpoint. Rather than clarifying the issues so that one finds it possible to make a rational choice, the rational philosophies amplify the confusion. Reason and philosophy have failed as a solution for ethical and moral questions. The answers we seek must come from an incontrovertible authority to which individuals and groups should submit. That authority is God.

3. THERE IS A NEED FOR ADORATION OF GOD

Though a free thinker may be able to recognize God and His greatness, he usually overlooks the importance of adoration. Even if one recognizes the need for adoration, he does not know how to do it. Some people may think it is important to sacrifice and burn animals, others pursue animal passions in the name of God. One believes the ascetic life is loved by God, while others believe that life is an abomination to God and destructive to the human race. Others adore God by singing and playing instruments, while others believe in submission and kneeling as their form of devotion. The acceptable form of devotion must accord with God's will, not our desires and whims. He should make His will clear to us through a messenger or prophet.

4. THERE IS A NEED TO RESTRAIN THE IMPULSES

Man, unguided and untrained, resembles the animals in his instinctive constitution. Reason is subverted to the service of satisfying his passions unless a restraining element is introduced. Philosophy is not helpful in restraining our passions, since it is available to only a few; nor is there a consistency in philosophy that urges us to control the passions. Some people reach the conclusion that we should strive only for instinctive satisfaction. We are now struggling against such an ultramaterialistic ideology, the doctrines of which discourage the restraint of passions for moral reasons. The ultimate moral and ethical standards all lie with God. When His messenger transmits His word, it will

be a sound basis for ending dispute over these matters.

5. THERE IS A NEED FOR INFORMATION ABOUT AFTERLIFE

For a man who believes in God, it is highly probable that his life may continue after death in some form. It is also probable that there will be a Day of Judgment on which man will be rewarded or penalized. If there is such an afterlife, man should prepare himself for the judgment. Only God could know about the existence of an afterlife. Philosophy is of no help here; nor can the human mind deduce the existence of the afterlife from observation or experience in this world. Only God has the certain knowledge. He can transmit this information through a messenger so that mankind will know and will be warned.

The answers to the questions raised above lie with God. He can impart the knowledge to man in any way He desires. One of these techniques is to send a prophet who clearly answers each of the questions as a mediator between God and man. The teachings of such a heavenly messenger would serve the following purposes:

A. To draw the people's attention to the real significance of the great order of the universe, which becomes insignificant to the common man, because of familiarity. The universe is truly infinite and full of wonders; and, if contemplated attentively, it could lead to a strong and sound faith in the Creator. Man's attention can be drawn to those natural signs through the prophet's teachings and directions.

B. To express the moral and ethical standards and codes with which mankind could conform and settle the controversial ethical issues.

C. To make the imperativeness of God's worship evident and to teach us how to perform such adorations.

D. To deliver to us the codes which are needed for curbing our appetites and to stimulate our aspirations for loftiness and purity which, if progressively increased, could rank us with the angels.

E. To inform us definitely that there is or there is not a life after death. This information could only be received from the Creator Who alone knows whether or not He will create the other world.

Wilson: The heavenly teachings did not serve all these purposes since we still dispute the ethical and moral issues. Disagreement still prevails on the manner of worship of the Creator, His existence, and life after death.

Chirri: These purposes have been satisfactorily served, since a great portion of humanity had agreed on most of the moral issues and believed in the Creator and the Hereafter. With the acceptance of these heavenly principles by such a great portion of humanity, mankind could restrict the loose appetites and moralize the world to some extent.

Furthermore, the heavenly information is necessary even if it does not serve any of these purposes. This holds true because the Creator should bring about the opportunity which may enable us to know Him and help promote our morality, which draws the actual line between human beings and animals. When God creates the other world or plans to create it, He should make it well-known to mankind by His heavenly information, which is the only way we can become aware of it. If the Creator does not send his messenger to transmit to mankind this information, we may

be excused when we ignore it, and we will have no opportunity to have a relative perfection. Moreover, if He creates the other world and makes it unknown to us, its creation would be utterly futile.

The historical facts had accorded themselves with this hypothesis, the necessity of the heavenly teachings. Providence did not neglect the human beings since they were in their primitive stage. Thus, many gifted individuals were chosen by the Creator to perform the great and noble task of reforming and teaching.

Wilson: From the word "prophet" we understand that the prophet is supposed to communicate with God and receive His words. The human ways of communication are physical, either through hearing some audible voice or reading some written words. A prophet is a human being like us. He can hear the voice by his ears and see the written word by his eyes. But God is not physical. He does not speak by voice, nor does He write by hand, How can a prophet communicate with God?

Chirri: A prophet may communicate with God through one of the following ways:

(a) He may receive the revelation mentally. God may show him spiritually some specific truth by creating, in his mind, a clear knowledge of that truth.

(b) God may create some words audible to the prophet, in some non-speaking object. The first revelation that was received by Moses came to him by this method. He heard the words of God coming from a tree.

(c) A prophet may receive a clear message from God through an angel messenger. The Prophet Mohammad re-

ceived the Holy Qur'an through the angel Gabriel. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "And it is not fitting for a mortal that God should speak to him, except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger to reveal, by His permission, what He chooses. Surely, He is High, Wise." 42:51

None of these ways through which a prophet communicates with God is usual to the rest of the people, and none of them is beyond the area of possibility. The Creator is able to communicate with His servant in any way He pleases. The recipient of revelation, however, is supposed to have certain qualifications which place him spiritually above the rest of mankind.

Wilson: History has witnessed many individuals who claimed prophethood. These individuals appeared in various periods, and some of them are still alive. We know that some of them were true prophets, and some of them were untrue. How can we distinguish between true and untrue prophets?

Chirri: A prophet is a messenger of God. He is an ambassador of God to mankind. An ambassador is supposed to have some credential papers, some signs which demonstrate his truthfulness. No one should be received as an ambassador on his own claim. Therefore, we find that those individuals who are believed to be prophets were equipped with some unusual powers which could not be found with other people.

Moses was empowered by God to convert his staff into a

serpent, to transform water into blood, and to split the sea with a strike of his staff. Jesus was empowered to cure the sick without medicine, to make the blind see, to bring the dead back to life, and, according to the Holy Qur'an, to speak to the people while he was in the cradle. Mohammad was equipped with the superb speech, the Holy Qur'an, which challenged mankind to produce its like in the Arabic language.

Wilson: Should the prophet be human or may God send to mankind a non-human messenger?

Chirri: A prophet is an example to mankind. He should share with them the same nature, the same ability, and the same limitation. An attractive example to the people must be obtainable. It must have the capability of inducing the people to follow it. Should the prophet be from a different nature, people will not attempt to follow his example. A relative perfection shown by a prophet should be possible for his followers. Should a human being show me a high degree of virtuous life, I may be tempted to try to attain that degree. He and I are human. What is possible for him is possible for me. But if an angel shows me a high degree of morality, I may not attempt to follow his example. What is possible for him may be impossible for me; he is not from the same nature.

There is another reason to believe that mankind should receive human prophets: We have advanced that a prophet is expected to substantiate his truthfulness by showing people unusual performance. By doing so, people would know that he is empowered by God because what he does is beyond his natural ability. This will not work if the prophet is non-

human, - let us say an angel. A human prophet may, for example, show his truthfulness by taking an unaided flight. Should an angel do the same, it will not demonstrate his truthfulness. Such a flight will not necessarily be beyond his natural ability, since he may not be affected naturally by gravitation .

Wilson: What does the belief in the prophethood include from the Islamic point of view?

Chirri: The belief in the prophethood, from the Islamic point of view, includes the following:

1. The belief in the prophethood of Mohammad. Mohammad is a major prophet sent not only to a particular nation, but to all mankind. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "Say: O mankind, surely I am the messenger of God to you all, of Him, Whose is the kingdom of the Heavens and the Earth. There is no god but He; He gives life and causes death. So believe in God and His messenger, the unschooled prophet who believes in God and His words, and follow him, so that you may be guided aright." 7:158

2. The belief in the prophethood of all the prophets who came before Mohammad because they are recognized by the Holy Qut'an:

> "Say: We believe in God and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and (in) that which has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and (in) that which was given to the prophets from their Lord. We do not make

> any distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit." 2:136

3. The belief in Mohammad as the final of the prophets whose death brought the prophethood to a close. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "Mohammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the messenger of God and the 'Khatam' of the prophets, and God knows all things." 33:40

The word Khatam means the seal which closes a container or the seal whose imprint confirms the authenticity of certain contents of a written document or a message. Sealing for closure or for confirmation comes at the end of what it closes or confirms.

The Prophet Mohammad said to his cousin Ali:

> "Thy position from me compares to the Position of Aaron from Moses, but there will be no prophet after me."

INQUIRY /12

The Prophet Mohammad

Wilson: The history of the Prophet informs us that at the age of forty, while he was worshipping on Mount Hira, the light of God shone upon him and he heard the voice of the Truth. At that moment his commission as a messenger of God to mankind commenced. What did the message of Hira reveal to Mohammad?

Chirri: The message of Hira revealed to the new prophet the facts that belong to the true concept of the True God: The power of creation, the power of transforming clay into a human being, and the power of making the matter conscious of itself and of the world. The power of making the matter conscious is clearly demonstrated by the human knowledge and the human capability of writing, which is the foundation of the world civilization. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "Read in the name of thy Lord Who creates, Who created man out of clay. Read and thy Lord is the Most Generous, - Who taught by the pen. Who

taught man what he knew not." 96:1-5

Wilson: How does Mohammad stand among the prophets?

Chirri: He stands in the record of the major prophets with clear distinctions:

1. He is a part of both world and religious histories. His message was an important factor in changing the history of the world, and no historian doubts his existence and his role in world events.

2. He is the only prophet who witnessed with his eyes the growth of his religion until it was adopted by a whole nation during his lifetime.

3. He is the universal prophet who was sent, not to a particular nation, such as the Arabs or the Hebrews, but to all mankind. From the Qur'an:

> "Say, O mankind, I am the Messenger of God to you all, of Him Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the Earth. . . ." 7: 158

4. His message clearly opposed all sorts of racial discrimination. Removal of all social barriers is an essential part of his message. White, black, red, and yellow are equal.

No race is superior to another race, and no nation is inferior to another nation. Man is to be praised or blamed only for what he does by his own choice. Being related to a particular nation or race is not our choice, nor is it of our own making. Our distinction can come only through our good deeds.

From the Holy Qur'an:

> "Certainly, the noblest among you in the eyes

of God is the most righteous of you." 49:13

5. He founded and established, during his lifetime, a powerful state, based on high ideals. The Muslim state was born in an age in which the government was conceived as a ruling body, superior to the people and imposed on its subjects without their choice. The people themselves never conceived their equality to their rulers, nor believed their equality to one another . In the teaching of Islam, the opposite is true. The government is a fruit of people's belief in one set of guiding principles. It is the legitimate child of their spontaneous cooperation for promotion of such principles. Thus, the promoters of such principles are related to each other and considered to be one brotherhood.

6. He defeated all his opponents, and no party was able to defeat him.

7. He is the prophet who declared the religious freedom when he was powerful enough to deprive many people of such a freedom. He and his followers were persecuted for thirteen years. He never spoke of religious freedom when they were subject of persecution. When he defeated all his opponents and was able to penalize the oppressors, he announced the following declaration:

> "There, shall be no compulsion in religion; the right direction is, henceforth, distinct from error." 2:256

8. He is the only prophet who declared himself as the Final Prophet whose death concludes the long history of prophethood. Prophethood was claimed by many individuals after Mohammad, but none of them was able to substantiate his claim. And now, after so many centuries

since his death, Mohammad is still standing in the history as the Final of the prophets.

9. He is the only Prophet who introduced to the world a book; that does not contain any human word. The Qur'an is not a dialogue between God and man, as the rest of the holy books; it is only the words of God which He put in the mouth of Mohammad to be transmitted through him to mankind.

Wilson; It is puzzling that the prophets who preceded Mohammad such as Moses and Jesus had been empowered to perform remarkable and supernatural works, while Mohammad did not show, or rather did not rely on miraculous actions. He only relied, in proving his prophethood, on the Qur'an. Why didn't he perform miracles similar to those of Jesus and Moses?

Chirri; There are two reasons for the difference between the type of Mohammad's miracle and the types of miracles of those prophets who preceded him:

1. The miracles of Jesus and Moses, it is true, were very remarkable; but the fact remains that in spite of their remarkability, they did not induce the people of their times to believe in those prophets or to adhere to their teachings. History informs us that the Israelites did not follow the Prophet Moses after he showed them all his wonders. After they crossed the sea on their feet, they showed no true adherence to his teaching. After he went to the mountain to receive the commandments, he came back to find them straying from the Divine road. Jesus was followed by multitudes, but when the crisis came, he was deserted even by his own disciples.

People, in general, never were induced by those wonders

to adhere to the heavenly teachings. When they witnessed supernatural performances, the majority of them called their performers magicians and imposters.

Had the same kind of miracles been repeated at the time of Mohammad, it would not have produced better results than it did before. For this, the type of miracles had to be changed.

2. Suppose that those miracles of Moses and Jesus were very productive, causing their witnesses to believe in the truthfulness of their performers. The fact remains that they were not permanent but only temporary miracles. No action can be seen twice. No action would last long. Making a blind see his way or bringing a dead back to life is a remarkable action, but such an action disappears as soon as it is done. As soon as the action is finished, it becomes history. Those who did not see it have to rely on the testimony of those who had seen it.

A prophet that will be followed by another prophet may rely on a remarkable performance in convincing his contemporaries. He does not have to worry about the future generations who will not see his miracles, because he can rely on the prophet who will come after him at a different period. The subsequent prophet will perform his own miracles, and he will endorse the prophet who preceded him.

With Mohammad, the case is different. He was the Final of the prophets. He could not rely on any miraculous action, because no action can last long enough to be seen by other generations. Nor could he rely on the endorsement of a subsequent prophet, because he is the Final of the prophets. He had to rely on some miracle, but his miracle must be from a

different type. It has to be a lasting miracle to be witnessed and tested by the future generations as well as by his contemporaries.

In a time when there was neither camera nor film to make one action witnessable at various times, we cannot conceive any kind of lasting miracles except the type of speech. When a speech is superb and recorded in a book, its superiority can be witnessed and tested at any time by any generation. If it is unmatchable, it will stay so forever, and its superiority call be judged by all generations. This is the type of miracle which is fitting for a final prophet, and this was the reason why Mohammad was equipped with the Holy Qur'an as evidence of his truthfulness.

INQUIRY /13

More Evidence on His Prophethood: Predictions Dealing with the Future of the Qur'an

Wilson: With the appreciation of the Arabic-speaking people and their respect for the Qur'an, I am inclined to believe in its superiority. As a matter of fact, history does not record any successful attempt by any individual or group to match the Qur'an. We know that the Arabic-speaking people were not all Muslims at any time. We know also that the Arabs at the time of Mohammad were very skillful in oratory, and we know that the majority of them were violently opposed to Islam. The Qur'an challenged them and the future generations to match it, but it seems that the opponents of Islam did not accept that challenge at any time.

The superiority of the Qur'an is a fact and beyond any reasonable doubt. But I would like to know if the Qur'an has anything, besides its superiority and beautiful style, that supports its being a true revelation of God and that Mohammad is truly His prophet.

Chirri: There are in the contents of the Qur'an more than one prediction dealing with the future, and those predictions are fulfilled. Knowledge of the future is possible only to God and unavailable to any human being.

Man has advanced so far in science and technology to a stage undreamed of before. With all his advancements in knowledge, he is still unable to foresee the future. The most civilized nations wage wars against each other, and none of them is assured of victory. Should the knowledge of the future be available to them, they would have avoided destructive wars. A nation that foresees its defeat would refrain from entering any war that will be concluded by its defeat.

To recognize the human inability of foreseeing the future, we need only to remember our election campaigns. In spite of all the information which is obtained through our modern media and scientific methods, none of the candidates is sure of his victory or defeat until the votes are counted.

There is a great deal of information contained in the Holy Qur'an dealing with the future which could not be humanly predicted. Those predictions were fulfilled, and their fulfillment indicates that the Qur'an is a true Divine revelation and that Mohammad is a true messenger of God.

Some of those prophecies deal with the future of the Holy Qur'an itself. Of these prophecies are the following:

> 1. "Certainly We have revealed the Reminder (the Qur'an), and we shall preserve it." 15:9

This verse informs us that the Qur'an shall not perish. It shall not disappear from this world, and it will last and continue forever .

This prediction was actually the opposite of what was

humanly expected. The Qur'an was introduced by a prophet who was unschooled and unable to read or write. He introduced it in a language of an illiterate nation. The Arabs at the time of the Prophet did not have a hundred readers in a million. In addition to this, the overwhelming majority of that nation was standing against the Prophet and his book, and so was the rest of the world. Under these circumstances, such a book was expected to perish and disappear. The chances of its continuity for so many generations were very slim.

2. The following verse explains:

> "It (the Qur'an) is an invincible book. Falsehood does not invade it neither from before it nor from behind it, a revelation from a Mighty, Praised One." 41:41-42

This verse informs the world that the Qur'an will not be interpolated by words that had been said before the time of its revelation nor by words that will be said after the time of its revelation. It will be pure and will continue so forever.

This, also, was a prediction contrary to what was humanly expected. A book, introduced under the circumstances which we advanced, could not be humanly expected to stay pure without any interpolation.

There was no printing-machine at the time of revelation, nor such a machine was invented until several centuries after Mohammad.

History shows us that no holy book had remained pure without interpolation. The holy books had undergone many changes in many centuries. The Qur'an was expected

not to be exceptional.

The two prophecies had been entirely fulfilled. The fulfillment of the first is self-evident: The Holy Qur'an did not perish. It lived and remains a highly living book. Actually the life of the Qur'an is so rich that it may be the most recited book in the world. Every Muslim is expected to pray five times a day, and each prayer includes a recital from the Holy Qur'an. Hundreds of millions of Muslims perform their daily prayers, and hundreds of millions of times the Qur'an is daily recited.

The fulfillment of the second prophecy is quite obvious. The Holy Qur'an remained unchanged. No human word was inserted into it. Even the critics of Islam testify for the remarkable purity of the text of this great book. The words of the Qur'an which we read now are exactly the same words which were recited by the Prophet Mohammad himself, without subtraction or addition.

3. The Holy Qur'an contains many statements by which the opponents of Islam were invited to produce any Arabic discourse that would compare to the Qur'anic discourse. One of these statements is the following:

> "Say: If all men.... will unanimously determine to challenge the Qur'an, they will not produce its equal, even if they combine their efforts." 17:88

This statement not only challenges mankind to compose speeches and discourses comparable to the Qur'an, but also predicts clearly that any such attempt will fail, and the Holy Qur'an will remain superior to all other Arabic discourses.

This statement is very far reaching. It tells that the Holy Qur'an will not be equalled, neither at the present nor in the future. Such a statement is a prediction in a very

unexpected direction. We know that the human talent and skill are always evolving and improving. This is true in any field. A scientific invention, regardless of its remarkability, is always expected to evolve and improve through additional knowledge and technology. The first plane that took off the ground, no doubt, was very remarkable, but it cannot compare to any of the planes of today.

Let us assume that the inventor of that first aircraft had predicted that his plane will not be equalled in the future. Such a prediction would be very absurd and will be disproved within one decade because it is opposed to the natural course. Mohammad recited this statement which is contrary to the natural course. He uttered these words about fourteen centuries ago, but his statement is still standing, and the events of the world could not disprove it. On the contrary, the statement now appears to be more meaningful than ever before. The older the prophecy becomes, the more truthful it will appear.

There is another amazing point in this prophecy. It is conceivable to challenge a certain class of people in afield which is not accessible to everyone, such as a special scientific field. We may conceive a gifted scientist, discovering a scientific secret not accessible to any other expert in that field. If such a scientist claims a permanent superiority in his invention, he would be challenging just a limited number of scientists.

With the Qur'an the case is different: There is nothing special in it; its discourse is composed of words and sentences with orders known, not only to a limited number of experts, but to all Arabic-speaking people. There isn't any secret that is hidden from the rest of the people. All of

it is known. The challenge, therefore, is not directed to a limited number of people; it is directed to the millions in every generation. With such a universal challenge, in no field of specialization, the failure to produce a match to it is much more remarkable than the failure of a few experts in a field of specialization.

This would be more amazing when we remember that no scientific secret or discovery has remained unmatchable. The highest secret in this century was the secret of the atomic bomb. It was the most important discovery or invention in this century. In spite of its great importance, it could not be kept exclusive for the country which produced it. Other countries tried to produce the same and succeeded.

Why did the Holy Qur'an remain superior and beyond any other Arabic discourse? How did mankind refuse to accept the challenge?

Either the Qur'an is truly superior and beyond the reach of any talented individual or group in any generation (and this means that it is a miraculous book), or it is within the reach of the people, but God miraculously prevented mankind from producing a similar discourse. In either case, the prophecy has been fulfilled, and the Qur'an is still standing unequalled.

INQUIRY /14

More Evidence: Forecasting the Future of Islam

Wilson: From reading the history of Islam, it seems that the future of the new faith and of its followers was very doubtful at the time of the revelation. The success of Islam afterwards and the growth of the numbers of its followers were unexpected. I often wondered if the unexpected success and rapid growth of Islam were foreseen by the Prophet and forecast by the Qur'an.

The forecast of this would be an impressive evidence on the truthfulness of Mohammad, because the future of the whole faith and its followers seemed to be very dark at the time of revelation.

Chirri: The Holy Qur'an contains definite prophecies dealing with the future of Islam and its followers.

One of those prophecies deals with the future of the Muslims. It assures the Muslims of a future religious freedom and promises them a mighty state:

> "God has promised those of you who believe (in Islam) and do good that He will surely make

> them rulers in the Earth, as He made those before them rulers, and that He will surely establish for them their religion, which He has chosen for them, and that He will surely give them the feeling of security in exchange of their fear, so they will worship Me, not associating aught with Me; and whoever is ungrateful after this, they are the transgressors." 24:55

When this prophecy was revealed, the followers of Islam were a very small minority of the inhabitants of Al-Hijaz. It was revealed, approximately, in the fifth year after the Hijrah when the Muslims were a few thousands, bitterly antagonized by all the inhabitants of Hijaz and the rest of the Arabian Peninsula. None of the Muslims at that time had a feeling of security, nor were they able to practice their religion freely. There was nothing indicating that such a hated and bitterly fought minority would survive, nor was the future of this new religion humanly predictable.

In spite of all these facts, the prophecy was revealed in a definite and unconditional form.

More prophecies are contained in the following verses which predict the triumph of Islam and the defeat of its opponents.

> "They desire to put out the light of God with their mouths, but God will perfect His light, though the disbelievers may be averse." 9:32; 61:8

> "He is the One Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the true religion, to make it outweigh all other religions though the polytheists may be averse." 9:33; 61 :9 and 48:28.

The first verse predicts that the opponents of Islam will

not succeed in putting out the light of God, nor will their attacks hinder its growth. God will make His light, Islam, perfect, though its opponents will oppose it strongly. They may argue, fight, assail and mobilize all their intellectual and material forces, determining to revoke Islam, but all that will not extinguish its light, nor will that prevent it from becoming full.

Both verses predict definitely and unconditionally the victory of Islam over its opponents.

When this prophecy was revealed, the small Muslim community was defending itself against the Polytheists and other hostile elements in Arabia. Afterwards it had to defend itself against the Persian and Byzantine Empires.

Each of these powers was incomparably greater and richer than the Muslim state. The Persian and Byzantine Empires were the outstanding forces in the world. To defeat them both is to defeat all considerable forces in the world and to become the world's superior power. This would fulfill completely the meaning of the prophecy, but this was seemingly impossible. We always expect the defeat of any single and relatively weak army when forced to combat on more than one field more than one superior power. This becomes clear when we remember that the mighty German army had been defeated twice in the twentieth century, only because it was fought by stronger allies on more than one front.

It may be the most remarkable military event in history, that the inhabitants of Madina and Mecca, whose number did not exceed a few thousands, could defend themselves, after the death of the great Prophet, against the attacks of the apostate Arabs. With the exception of the Muslims of these two cities, almost all the Arab nation had apostatized after the death of the Prophet.

The Muslim state was compelled, afterwards, to fight

against the Byzantine and Persian Empires. These two great empires fought the Muslims simultaneously on two different fronts. The scanty Muslim forces were forced to divide themselves in order to maintain the defense. The result was a wondrous military phenomenon. The two great powers were vanquished and Persia was completely defeated. Within one hundred years, the vast area extending from the Atlantic Ocean to India, came under the rule of Islam. Those poor and helpless people, at the time of the revelation of this prophecy, suddenly became the superior power of the world.

The Prophet, relying on the heavenly information, had forecast this triumph which took place after his death. Speaking to Odey, son of Hatam (a Christian chief who joined the new faith afterwards), the Prophet Mohammad uttered the following:

> ". . . Thou dost not incline to Islamism," continued Mohammad, "because thou seest we are poor. The time is at hand when true believers will have more wealth than they know how to manage. Perhaps thou art deterred by seeing the small number of the Muslims in comparison to the number of their enemies. By God, in a little while, a Muslim woman will be able to make a pilgrimage on her camel, alone and fearless, from Kadesia (Iraqi area) to God's temple at Mecca. Thou thinkest, probably, that the might is in the hands of the unbelievers; know that the time is not far off when we Will plant our standard on the white castles of Babylon."[1]

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(1) *Life of Mohammad* by Washington Irving, chaper 32.

INQUIRY /15

Information About the Future of the Prophet and the Prophethood

Wilson: So far we have discussed two types of Qur'anic statements prophesying unexpected futures: one dealing with the fate of the Qur'an itself, and another dealing with the future of Islam. Does the Qur'an offer any prediction about the future of the Prophet himself?

Chirri: The Holy Qur'an contains a very clear information that deals with the safety of the Prophet Mohammad:

> "O Messenger, deliver that which had been revealed to thee from thy Lord; and if thou do not, thou hast not delivered His message. And God will protect thee from all men. Surely God guides not the disbelieving people." 5:70

The verse assures the Prophet Mohammad a full protection against all human beings. No human power, according to the prophecy, can destroy the life of Mohammad. Should the Prophet die in the battlefield or be assassinated, the

statement would be untrue and the prophethood disproved.

With the conditions under which the Prophet lived, the prophecy was contrary to human expectancy. From the time Islam was publicly proclaimed, the Prophet was faced with a public hostility. He was singled out as the sole enemy of the Meccans. His life became surrounded with dangers. He lived constantly under threat and for many years without any physical protection. When his defender, Abu-Talib, died, he could not even find a temporary protection in the holy sanctuaries in order to deliver his message to the pilgrims.

The important leaders took a solemn pledge to hunt him down and kill him. When he escaped, a great reward was announced for his capture, dead or alive. Before departure to Madina, Mohammad's life was certain to be taken, and Islam was expected to be wiped out while it was still only a spark.

After arriving in Madina, the battles began and the Muslims were thrown into open and violent conflict, in which they were always greatly outnumbered. The Meccans managed to set the desert tribes against the Muslims. Moreover, he rulers of the Non-Arab nations were vehemently exasperated by the very strong language Mohammad used in inviting them to embrace Islam. An example of these invitations is his message to Heraclius, the Byzantine Emperor:

> "In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. From Mohammad, the son of Abdullah, the Apostle of God, to Heraclius, the great of the Romans. Surely I send you the invitation of Islam. Be Muslim, and thou will be safe. God will reward

> thee twice. If thou turn away, thou will be burdened with the sins of thy subjects. People of the Scripture, come to an equitable word between us and you; That we shall worship none but God, and that we shall associate naught with Him, and that we shall not take each other for lords besides the Almighty God. But if they turn away, then say: Bear witness, we are Muslims." *Life of the Prophet Mohammad,* Mohammad Hussein Haikal, 3rded., p. 371

Despite the dangers with which the Prophet was surrounded, he lived an ordinary life. He had no bodyguards and fought in battle, sometimes in the front lines. He walked the streets after dark and dwelt in an unguarded home. There was abundant opportunity for assassination, and numerous attempts were made. A few of these attempts will be mentioned, and they are selected from many occurrences:

One day he was sleeping alone at the foot of a tree, at some distance from his camp. He was awakened by a noise and lo! he beheld Durthur, an enemy warrior, standing over him withdrawn sword. "O Mohammad," cried he, "Who is there to save thee?" "God," replied the Prophet. For some unknown reason, Durthur let his sword fall, which was instantly seized by the Prophet. Brandishing the weapon, he exclaimed in turn, "Who is there now to save thee, O Durthur?" "Alas! No one," replied the soldier. "Then learn from me to be merciful." So saying, he returned his sword to him. The heart of the soldier was overcome. He acknowledged

Mohammad as a true prophet and embraced the faith.[1]

On another occasion, Mohammad went accompanied by some of his followers to visit a non-Muslim tribe. A meal was prepared outside, in front of the mansion of the chief of the tribe. The Prophet knew that he had been treacherously decoyed hither and was to be slain as he sat down to eat. It is said that he was to be crushed by a millstone flung from the terraced roof of the house. Without intimating his knowledge of the treason, he left the company abruptly and hastened back to Madina.[2]

More than once, Mohammad was abandoned in battle when his warriors left him almost alone against thousands of pagans. At such times, he was the target of the enemy forces and was extremely vulnerable.

Had Mohammad been trying to perpetuate a lie, he might have chosen a prophecy more likely to prove true than that he would be protected against harm in such situations. Mohammad was sure of God's protection, and the prophecy was fulfilled.

Wilson: Does the Qur'an offer any information about the future of the prophethood in general?

Chirri: The declaration which states the finality of the Prophet Mohammad is a clear information about the future of prophethood:

> "Mohammad is not a father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of God and the

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(1) *Life of Mohammad* by Washington Irving, chapter 18.

(2) *Life of Mohammad* by Washington Irving, chapter 21.

> 'Khatam' of the prophets, and God is Ever-Knower of all things." 33:40

The word Khatam, as advanced, means the seal which closes a container or the seal whose imprint confirms the authenticity of certain contents of a written document or a message. Sealing for closure or for confirmation comes at the end of what it closes or confirms.

The Prophet Mohammad said to his cousin Ali:

> "Thy position from me compares to the position of Aaron from Moses, but there will be no prophet after me."

To declare that Mohammad is the final of the prophets is, actually, an information about the very far future of the prophethood. It informs that the world shall not witness a prophet after the death of Mohammad, and that God will not send any messenger to mankind, subsequent to him. Thus the long history of the prophethood will come to a close by the death of Mohammad.

This is a prophecy in an entirely unexpected direction. We should expect God to continue sending His prophets to mankind. He sent many prophets before Mohammad, and we normally expect Him to continue doing so after the death of the Prophet Mohammad. The human generations, before Mohammad, were not more entitled to heavenly messages than the generations subsequent to him. As a matter of fact, Materialism in the modern age is much greater than it was before Mohammad; therefore, a spiritual revelation would be much more needed than ever before.

The complexity of the causes in this area is entirely beyond the human knowledge. No human being is able to

know how God determines to send a prophet to mankind. The knowledge of this is exclusive only to God.

Wilson: An impressive prophecy usually deals with some specific event that may take place at a certain time. The information which the verse contains does not deal with a specific event that will take place at a particular time. It does not tell us of something that will happen. It is a negative information, telling us that no prophet will come after Mohammad.

Chirri: To give a positive information is much easier than to give a negative one. Let us illustrate that by an example of information that deals with the past rather than the future: It is much easier to say that Mr. Smith drove a car than to say that Mr. Johnson never drove a car. To be truthful in the positive one, one needs to see Mr. Smith once driving a car. To say truthfully that Mr. Johnson never drove a car, one needs to know all the past of Mr. Johnson.

Let us deal with a future information. We may predict that there will be, within fifty years, a genius scientist from among the people of Detroit. This is much easier than to say that there will be no genius scientist in Detroit within fifty years. Such information requires an extensive knowledge about the millions who will live in Detroit within that period. Such knowledge is actually beyond our reach.

Suppose that we make a wider prediction. Let us state that the United States of America or the whole world will not have any genius scientist for fifty years. Such a prediction would obviously be absurd. If we predict that the whole world will not have such a scientist forever, the

absurdity of our prediction would be self -evident.

Such is the declaration of the finality of the prophethood of Mohammad. It deals not only with a limited future of a particular nation; it deals with the unlimited future of the whole world. The whole world, it actually says, will not witness another prophet after Mohammad, until the end of the world. Mohammad himself was humanly unable to foresee such a future. The prediction was not his. It is a revelation of the only One Who knows the future of mankind.

This prophecy has been fulfilled. The world, for the last thirteen centuries, did not witness one single prophet.

Wilson: Many individuals after Mohammad claimed prophethood. some of them lived in this century and some of them are still living. Does not their claim affect the truthfulness of the prophecy?

Chirri: The claim of prophethood does not amount to anything and will not affect the truthfulness of this prophecy, unless such a claim has been proven. It is a fact that hundreds of individuals proclaimed their prophethood, and some of them had lived at the time of the Prophet Mohammad himself. It is also a fact that none of those individuals could prove their prophethood. Most of them have been disproved, and their claims died with them. The disproval of their claims is, by itself, another evidence on the truth and the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Wilson: The absence of prophethood in the last thirteen centuries is not a conclusive evidence of the end of prophethood. This vacuum in the past does not mean that mankind will not receive more prophets in the future.

Should any messenger come in the future, his advent will disprove the declaration.

Chirri: The finality of the prophethood of Mohammad was not evident at the time of the Prophet himself because the advent of other prophets was highly probable. And so it seemed within the first few centuries, subsequent to his death. By the lapse of a thousand years from the death of the Prophet, the advent of more prophets became less probable. Separation between two prophets before the time of Mohammad never reached a thousand or even seven hundred years. There was only about four hundred years between Abraham and Moses. Hundreds of prophets came successively between Moses and Jesus. The separation between Jesus and Mohammad did not reach six hundred years.

The need for prophets is always standing. The absence of the prophethood within a thousand years, in spite of the need of the human race for guidance, is very unusual. It suggests a certain relation between this long vacuum and the finality of the Prophet Mohammad. The relation between the finality of the Prophet Mohammad and the absence of the prophets for such a long period is very obvious. By the lapse of more than thirteen centuries, the truthfulness of the prophecy has become more evident. The older this prophecy becomes, the clearer its truth will be. The truth of the declaration has passed the stage of any reasonable doubt. The probability of the advent of future prophets now has become negligible.

Wilson: I may agree with you that though the advent of more prophets is possible, it is less probable than before;

and it seems that it is unlikely to happen in the future. But I would like to know the reason for the conclusion of the prophethood by the death of Mohammad. Mankind still needs spiritual guidance and, actually, with the rise of Materialism in the modern ages, mankind needs such guidance more than ever before.

Chirri: I do not know the exact reason for the conclusion of the prophethood. It may be the universality of the prophethood of Mohammad. All the previous prophets were sent to particular communities or nations. All the Israelite prophets were sent to the Hebrews. None of them were sent to the whole human race. Even the great Jesus, according to the Gospel, said:

> "I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Only Mohammad came as a universal prophet who was sent to no particular nation or region but to all mankind. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "Say: O mankind, surely I am the Messenger of God to you all, of Him, Whose is the kingdom of the Heavens and the Earth." 7:158

By reaching the degree of universality, the prophethood has reached its highest stage. It may end at that stage. The message is directed to the whole human race. Mankind no longer lacks the spiritual guidance. The guidance has become available to all nations and to every individual. What mankind needs is not a new guidance, but the acceptance of the available guidance.

INQUIRY /16

Prediction of a Christian Triumph

Wilson: I often wondered about some Qur'anic verses which are contained in chapter 30. The verses deal with the future of the Romans and predict their triumph over their opponents:

> "The Romans are vanquished in the nearby land, and they, after their defeat, will gain victory within nine years. God's is the command before and after. And on that day, the believers will rejoice for God's help. He helps whom He pleases, and He is the Mighty, the Merciful. (It is) God's promise. God will not fail in His promise, but most people know not." 30:1-6

I like to hear your comment on these verses which seem to contain a very definite prophecy, as I would like to know if that prophecy has been fulfilled.

Chirri: In the first decade of the seventh century, a war between the two great powers of the time, the Persian and

Byzantine Empires was started. The war continued for more than twenty years, and the Persians were mostly victorious.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* describes the situation:

> "The Persian armies plundered Syria and Asia Minor, and in 608 advanced to Chaledon. In 613 and 614, Damascus and Jerusalem were taken by the General Shahaboraz, and the Holy Cross was carried away in the triumph. Soon after, even Egypt was conquered. The Romans (the people of the Byzantine Empire) could offer but little resistance, as they were torn by internal dissensions and pressed by the Avars and Slavs."

The verses from the Qur'an cited were revealed in the sixth or seventh year after the first revelation came to Mohammad. (This means that these verses were revealed in 615 or 616.) The prophecy contained therein is definite and unconditional. It states that the vanquished Romans will obtain a decisive triumph over the victorious Persians within nine years from this revelation.

Once again the prophecy was made in a direction contrary to the expected outcome of the conflict. It was to be expected that the Romans would be defeated completely, since the Persian forces had already reached the very gates of Constantinople. At that time even the Roman leaders had little hope of eventual victory .

The Roman leaders, with all their military skill and information about that war, could not anticipate their victory. Clear information was unavailable to Mohammad because radio, television, press and efficient postal system did not

yet exist. Mohammad, living in Mecca and very far from Constantinople, made the prediction of triumph within a stated time.

The prophecy was fulfilled within nine years after it had been made. Heraclius, the Roman Emperor, advanced to Northern Media, where he destroyed the great fire temple of Gondzak; then in 623 he recaptured all of the lost ground.

Wilson: The above quoted verses indicate that the Muslims were very concerned for the defeat of the Romans at the hand of the Persians. The prophecy seems to have been revealed as a condolence to the Muslims, since it states that the believers in Islam will rejoice for the victory of the Romans.

This actually announces a true love on the part of the Muslims towards the Christians.

Chirri: Your statement is true. The Muslims actually were very saddened by the news of the defeat of the Christians at that time. The Christians are followers of the scriptures, and the Muslims are followers of the new scripture, the Qur'an. Both share many beliefs. The Muslims, therefore, felt that there is a close bond between them and the Christians. They felt that the Christians are their brothers in religion.

The news of the defeat of the Romans was a good tiding to the idol-worshippers. They rejoiced at the defeat of the Christians and classed them with the Muslims, their enemies, because both Muslims and Christians are followers of the scriptures and opposed to idol-worshipping.

This relation between the Muslims and the Christians

was only natural. Had the Christians accepted Mohammad and received his truth with open hearts, as the Muslims accepted the truth of Jesus, the brotherly relation could have continued between the followers of the two faiths. Unfortunately, the Christians refused to recognize the prophethood of Mohammad and to accept his truth. This and the subsequent events which took place after the death of the Prophet changed the natural atmosphere between the Muslims and Christians.

INQUIR Y/ 17

More Evidence: Revealing Unknown Facts

Wilson: Does the Holy Qur'an contain any information dealing with facts known to our scientific age but unknown to the world at the time of Mohammad? The existence of this type of information, if any, would be additional evidence on the prophethood of Mohammad. It is impossible for an unschooled person such as Mohammad, who lived in the seventh century, to know what would be discovered by modern scientists. Any information of this sort would be very convincing evidence on the soundness of the message of Islam.

Chirri: The reader of the Qur'an may find more than one reference dealing with certain facts, some of them have been discovered recently, and some of them are still in the stage of anticipation.

Modern science is looking now, though without certainty, for the time when we will find living beings on some other planets. The scientists of today are not sure of the

existence of any biological life on planets other than ours, but to them this is highly probable.

As a matter of fact, one of the Russian scientists claimed that he received signals from outer space, and he thought that the source of those signals is some living being located on a different planet. The scientist may be able in the near or remote future to find and meet other living beings on planets other than ours.

What we are hoping to discover in our scientific age was forecast over thirteen centuries ago in the Holy Qur'an:

> "And of His signs is the creation of the Heavens, and the Earth and what He has spread forth in both of them of walking biological beings, and He is All-Powerful to gather them together, when He wills." 42:29

The verse informs us of the existence of biological living beings who walk on their feet in the heavens and the earth, arid that it is possible for the living beings who are stationed on our planet to join the ones who are stationed in the heavens.

One of the scientific discoveries of our modern age is the existence of sex in the plants as well as in the animal kingdom. The entire pollen grain, the scientists say, is composed of cells which have the reduced number of chromosomes. Two of these cells are male cells. To function in reproduction, the pollen must fall on the stigma of some flower and develop a tube down through the stigma and other tissues until it reaches the egg. The two male cells pass down through this tube, usually near its growing tip. One of them fertilizes the egg, and from the combined cells, an embryo develops. The other male cell unites usually with

two other cells near the egg, in the middle of the embryo sac, and the triple product forms the nutritive part of the seed .

The existence of male and female in plants was entirely unknown before the advance of modern science. But the Holy Qur'an clearly states the existence of sex in the plant kingdom:

> "Glory be to the One Who created all pairs of males and females of what the Earth grows and of themselves and of what they know not." 36:36

At the time of the Prophet Mohammad, no one had any knowledge about the conditions of outer space. People used to think that the more man ascends to the sky, the more he may find air and the more he would be able to breathe. Now we know that outer space does not contain air, and that if a person ascends into the sky, he may suffocate through lack of oxygen.

The Holy Qur'an, however, has a clear indication of this fact:

> "So whomsoever God chooses to guide, He opens his heart for Islam, and whomsoever He chooses to leave in error, He makes his chest close and narrow as if he is ascending in the sky. Thus, does God lay penalty on those who do not believe." 6:125

The narrowness of the chest of a person who ascends in the sky means his incapability of breathing which was contrary to the prevalent concept about outer space at the time of Mohammad.

INQUIRY /18

The Bible Testifies for Mohammad

Wilson: The evidence which has been discussed is very convincing and offers a great support to the prophethood of Mohammad. The superiority of the Qur'an itself is primary evidence of this truth and so are the many quoted prophecies. I wonder if the Old and the New Testaments contain any prophecy foretelling the advent of the Prophet Mohammad.

Chirri: There is in the Bible more than one statement which indicate the expectation of the Prophet Mohammad. He is not mentioned by name, but the descriptions seem to fit only Mohammad.

We find in the Deuteronomy book the following statement:

> "I will raise up for them (the Israelites) a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them

> all that I command him. And whoever will not give heed to My words which he shall speak in My name, I, Myself, will require it of him." 18:18-19

This statement promises that God will raise up a prophet from among the brethren of the Israelites; that that prophet will be like Moses himself; that God will put His own words, in the mouth of that prophet; and that that prophet will speak those words in the name of God Who put them in his mouth.

Thus, the expected prophet has three descriptions, none of them is applicable but to the Prophet Mohammad:

1. The promised prophet will be from the brethren of the Israelites. The Israelites are related only to the Arabs. There are no people in the world that may be called the brethren of the Israelites except the Arabs, because the Israelites are the descendants of Isaac, and the Arabs are the descendants of Ishmael, the older brother of Isaac.

2. That prophet will be like Moses. Moses was a prophet of a new dispensation, and he was a secular as well as a spiritual leader to his people. This description fits only Mohammad among all the prophets who came after Moses. None of those prophets, including Jesus, was sent with new rules and dispensations. Jesus followed the dispensations of Moses and did not introduce new religious laws. Nor was he a secular leader to the Israelites. In addition to this, all those prophets, except Mohammad, came from the Israelites themselves and not from their brethren.

3. The statement described the promised prophet as a prophet who will not speak of his own. The very words of

God will be put in his mouth.

No prophet except Mohammad has claimed that his book contains the very words of God. Moses himself received the revelation, but he conveyed the heavenly message by his own words. What we read in the five books of Moses is considered to be the words of Moses, not the very words of God. All the books of which the Old Testament is composed were written and worded by human writers, and so are the four gospels. Jesus spoke the truth which he received, but he spoke in his own words. The Bible, at best, is considered a dialogue between God and man.

Only the Qur'an contains the words which Mohammad recited as the very direct words of God. Mohammad never claimed any word in the Qur'an. He recited the Qur'anic words as the words of God who put them in the mouth of Mohammad.

Thus, the descriptions seem to fit only Mohammad, and no one else.

Another statement, indicating the anticipation of Mohammad, is found in the same Deuteronomy book:

> "This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. He said:
>
> "The Lord came from Sinai, and dawned from Seir upon us; He shone forth from Mount Paran, He came from the ten thousands of holy ones with flaming fire at His right hand." 33

The Lord's coming means the coming of His revelation. Moses spoke of God's manifestation to three prophets at

three places: The manifestation in Sinai which represents the prophethood of Moses himself.

The other manifestation is the revelation which was received at Seir. This represents the revelation which was received by Jesus because Seir is located in the land of Jordan.

The third manifestation is the light of God which shone from the Mount of Paran. This represents the prophethood of Mohammad. The Mount of Paran is located in the country of Hijaz, the country in which Mohammad was born and lived. The following words give more indications to this fact:

> "He came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at His right hand."

Mohammad is the Prophet who entered Mecca, the capital of Hijaz, heading an army of ten thousand Muslims by which he subdued the idol-worshippers of Mecca.

The New Testament, also, contains some clear anticipation of the advent of Mohammad:

> "Jesus said unto them (the Israelites), did ye never read in the scriptures, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Matthew 21:42-44

The statement is a prophecy informing the Jews that the kingdom of God shall be taken from them, and that it will be given to another nation; No other nation after Jesus had claimed a heavenly message except the Arab nation which conveyed to the world the message of Islam which was revealed to Mohammad. Jesus called the nation which will supersede the Israelites "the stone which was rejected by the builders." This is a reference to the covenant which was made between God and Isaac, at the time of Abraham, of which Ishmael was excluded. From the Old Testament:

> "As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him and make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly: he shall be the father of twelve princes and I will make him a great nation. But I will establish my Covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year." 1:17:20-21

Ishmael and his children, according to this statement, have been excluded, at the time of Abraham, from the covenant, and for this, Jesus called them the stone which was rejected by the builders. Now Jesus was informing the Israelites that the same stone which was rejected will become the head of the corner .

Mohammad and the Arabs are descendants of Ishmael, and these are the nation which Jesus expected to supersede the Israelite nation.

Jesus described the superseding nation as a crushing stone; whoever falls on it will be broken, and on whom it may fall, it will grind him to powder. This means that that

nation which will receive the kingdom of God will be a brave nation, capable of defeating any enemy that may attack it and crushing any enemy it may attack. This description is applicable only to the Arab nation which was distinguished from among all nations by carrying a spiritual message and by being brave enough to defend itself and to defeat its enemies. History, after Jesus, had witnessed many brave nations, but none of them were motivated by a heavenly revelation except the nation of Mohammad.

INQUIRY /19

The Hereafter

Wilson: Now it is about time to discuss the important issue of Immortality. The Old Testament is not clear on the subject of the Hereafter. The Jews, therefore, do not emphasize life after death. The New Testament has dealt with the subject and spoken clearly of the Hereafter; consequently, the Christians, in general, subscribe to the belief in the Hereafter. I know that the Holy Qur'an confirms this doctrine, but I would like to know if it is considered one of the articles of the faith of Islam.

Chirri: The Doctrine of Resurrection is an important article of the Islamic faith. The book of Islam declares that the human race shall cease to exist on this planet, and that on a certain day, appointed by God and known only to Him, every human being will be brought back to life again and required to give an account for what he had done during his lifetime. Every individual will receive on that day a reward or punishment according to his good or bad deed:

"Everyone on it (the Earth) passes away, and

there endures forever the might of your Lord, the Lord of Glory and Honor." 55:26-27

"And they used to say: When we die and become dust and bones, shall we then be raised? Say: The ancients and those of later times will surely be gathered together for the appointed hour of a known day." 56:47-50

Wilson: The concept of the Hereafter is very remote from the area of our human experience. It is not easy to conceive that a person who died physically will continue to live spiritually or that he will live later, long after he died. Science, though not able to disprove the possibility of life after death, is not able to give any support to such a concept.

Chirri: Although the concept of the Hereafter is beyond the area of our human experience, it does seem to be logical. To be consistent, we have to subscribe to this doctrine. We believe in God and His justice. The Just God, Who is All Powerful, is not expected to leave a good doer without a reward, nor should we expect Him to leave an oppressor unpunished. Millions and millions of good doers, oppressed and persecuted, lived and died without being compensated. Millions and millions of wrong doers, persecutors, murderers, and tyrants lived and died without being penalized in this world. The Just God Who is All-Powerful, should not let such wrong doers escape His punishment, nor should He leave the good doers uncompensated. There must be another world in which there will be an ample time for implementing the heavenly justice.

The Holy Qur'an bases the necessity of the Hereafter

on the concept of the heavenly justice:

> "On that day (the Day of Judgment) men will come forth as scattered individuals, so that they may be shown their works.
>
> "So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it." 99:6-8

Wilson: Your argument in support of the doctrine of the Hereafter falls short of its ultimate goal. It is a good argument, but all it amounts to is that we should expect a future world in which God rewards the good doer and penalizes the wrong doer; but it does not prove that our expectation will materialize. There is a great difference between what ought to be and what will be. Our purpose is not only to show the need for a future world, but to prove, also, that that world will become a reality.

Chirri: The existence of the future world cannot be proven by a direct and tangible evidence. It is beyond the area of our perception and experience. It is a future unrelated naturally to our present, nor is it linked with it through a familiar cause. Tangible and direct evidence on such a future is absent, but indirect evidence on that future is available.

The prophets of God had forecast the future world, and we may rely on their information. The evidence of the truthfulness of those prophets is the indirect evidence on the Hereafter. We may rely on the statements of a prophet such as Mohammad, because his prophethood is supported by a tangible evidence. A prophet does not mislead the people,

nor would he misinform them, We have to accept his statements on the future as well as on the present. To accept his prophethood and doubt his information is inconsistent.

Wilson: How important is this article of the faith in Islam from the Qur'anic point of view?

Chirri: In many passages from the Holy Qur'an, the belief in the Hereafter is placed next to the belief in God. This shows that the belief in the Hereafter is more important than any other article of the Islamic faith after the belief in God:

> "Surely those who believe (in Islam) and those who are Jews, and the Christians. . ., whoever believes in God and the Hereafter and does good, they have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve." 2:62

> "They believe in God and the Hereafter, and they enjoin good and forbid evil and vie one with another in the good deeds. And those are among the righteous." 3: 114

Wilson: Mohammad has informed mankind of the Hereafter. His information is clear and positive. Jesus, before him, advanced some information on the subject. Moses seems to have been completely silent on the issue. This raises a question: The absence of information on the subject in the books of Moses is puzzling. If the doctrine of Resurrection is so important, it should have been revealed to Moses, as well as to Mohammad and Jesus.

Chirri: The absence of any statement on the subject in

the books of Moses does not mean that God did not reveal to him any information on the Hereafter, nor should it prove that Moses never informed his people of a future life. The five books of Moses probably had undergone some changes and deletions. The Holy Qur'an informs us that Moses had spoken of the Hereafter:

> "And he who believed (in the message of Moses) said: (addressing the Opponents of Moses) O My people, follow me. I will guide you to the right way. O My people, the life of this world is but a (passing) enjoyment, and the Hereafter; that is the abode to settle." 40:38-39

> "And Moses chose of his people seventy men for Our appointed time, and when they were seized with violent quaking, he said: My Lord! If Thou hadst willed, Thou hadst destroyed them long before, and me with them. Wilt Thou destroy us for that which the ignorant among us did? It is but Thy trial (of us)... Thou art our Protecting Guardian, therefore, forgive us and have mercy on us, Thou art the Best of all who show forgiveness, and ordain for us in this world that which is good, and in the Hereafter (that which is good), Lo! We have turned unto Thee." 7:155-156

The Holy Qur'an informs us also that the Prophet Abraham had spoken clearly of the Hereafter, and that he prayed to God to show him how He revives the dead:

> "And when Abraham said: My Lord, show me how Thou givest life to the dead, He said: Dost thou not believe? He said: Yes, but that my heart may be at ease." 2: 260.

Wilson: You have stated that Islam teaches that every human being, on an appointed day known only to God, will be brought back to life. That day is the Day of Judgment. Now, may I ask about the long time which separates our life in this world from the Hereafter? Does man continue to live, in some form, after he dies until the Day of Judgment of does his life come to a complete extinction by death? Is there a clear Qur'anic statement on our life or extinction, subsequent to our death and prior to our resurrection?

Chirri: The human soul, according to the Islamic teaching, will not be extinguished by death. It shall continue to live throughout the long period which separates our physical death from our resurrection, and such a life is required for resurrection.

We cannot conceive man's resurrection if his life is entirely terminated by death. Resurrection means bringing the dead person back to life. If life entirely ceases to exist after death, there will be no way to bring back to life the same person. There would be two existences: one before death, and the other on the Day of Judgment. The two existences would be separated by a complete non-existence. The second existence could not be the same as the first one. There would be two persons, not one. The second one, at best, would be similar to the first, and never the same.

Resurrection of the same person, therefore, cannot be realized unless the life of the human being continues in some form after his death. Otherwise, the newly created one on the Day of Judgment would be other than the person whose life came to extinction by death. And the very purpose of resurrection will not be served if human life will not continue after death.

The purpose of the Hereafter is to reward the good doer and to punish the wrong doer. If man will cease entirely to exist after his death, he will not be able to receive any reward or punishment. The newly created person on the Day of Judgment will not be the same person who lived before. He will deserve neither a reward nor a punishment, because he is not the same one who lived before, nor did he do any good or bad.

Thus, we ought to understand from all the Qur'anic passages, pertaining to the Hereafter, that man will continue to live a spiritual life until the Day of Judgment. The Holy Qur'an, however, is explicit on this point:

> "And speak not of those who are slain in the way of God as dead.
>
> "Nay, (they are) alive, but you perceive not." 2:154.
>
> "And think not of those who are killed in the way of God as dead.
>
> "Nay, they are alive being provided sustenance from their Lord. Rejoicing in what God has given them out of His grace, and they rejoice for the sake of those who (being left) behind them, have not yet joined them, that they have no fear, nor shall they grieve. They rejoice for the favor of God and His grace, and that God wastes not the reward of the believers." 3:168-170.

Wilson: Those who subscribe to the doctrine of the Hereafter differ on an important point: some of them believe that life in the Hereafter would be only spiritual, while

others believe that human life on the Day of Resurrection will be physical as well as spiritual. What does Islam teach in regard to this matter?

Chirri: The teaching of Islam is very clear on this point. Man will be brought back to life on the Day of Judgment physically as well as spiritually. A human being is not only a spiritual being. Re-creation of a real man requires both body and soul; otherwise, he would be a sort of an angel rather than a human being.

There is another reason to expect both physical and spiritual resurrection:

The very concept of resurrection cannot be realized without reconstruction of the human body. Since man will Continue to live spiritually after his death, his resurrection cannot mean re-creation of his spirit because his spirit did not die. Thus, the spiritual life alone in the Hereafter cannot be called resurrection because it does not add anything to the life of the individual which has continued in its spiritual form. Resurrection can only be realized by re-creation. This means reconstruction of the disintegrated body and reuniting it with the soul which still exists. The language of the Qur'an is very clear on this point and does not accept any different interpretation :

> "And the call is issued, then lo! from their graves they will hasten on to their Lord. They will say: O woe to us! Who has raised us up from our sleeping place? This is what the Beneficent promised, and the messengers told the truth. It is but a single cry, then lo! They are all brought forth." 36:51-53

> "So, turn away from them. On the day when the Inviter invites them to a hard task-their eyes cast down, they will go forth from their graves as if they were scattered locusts, hastening to the Inviter. The disbelievers will say: This is a hard day." 54:6-8

Wilson: The concept of the physical resurrection has its own difficulties: Suppose a cannibal ate a human body. The eaten body would be integrated with the body of its eater. If the body is resurrected on the Day of Judgment, it would not be possible to judge whether the body belongs to the eater or the eaten. Suppose a human body were eaten by a bird or an animal. The eaten body would be integrated with the body of its eater. What will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment? Is it the bird and the animal or the human body?

Chirri: No food would be entirely integrated with the body of its eater, and resurrection does not require the existence of all the elements of the body. As long as the substance or some of the substance of the body remains unintegrated with the body of the eater, the reconstruction of the respective body would be possible.

Furthermore, God Who has power over everything can distinguish between the original parts of the body of the eater and what was integrated with it from the other body. He is able to separate them and to reconstruct two separate bodies. Suppose the separation is impossible, God is able to create a body from different elements other than the lost one and unite the newly created body with the human soul on the Day of Judgment.

Wilson: Some religions teach that the human soul is

simple and indivisible, and some philosophers subscribe to these ideas. Does Islam teach the same or does it have a different teaching in regard to this?

Chirri: The Qur'an is silent on these points. It does not confirm nor deny the simplicity or the indivisibility or the immutability of the human soul. Nor does it state that the human soul is a substance or that it is non-physical or physical. It is completely silent on all of these aspects, and it actually dismisses all these questions. They are beyond the human knowledge, and the answer to any of these questions will not serve a religious purpose. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "And they ask thee about the (human) soul. Say: The soul proceeds from my Lord's command, and of knowledge you are given but little." 17:85

Wilson: Some religions teach that the human soul after death may occupy a body of a newly born child or it may occupy a living body of some animal. Does Islam subscribe to any concept of reincarnation or transmigration?

Chirri: The Holy Qur'an clearly denies the concepts of reincarnation and transmigration. The human soul, leaving the body at the time of death, will not be allowed to re-live in this world in any form. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "Until death overtakes one of them, he says: My Lord, send me back, that I may do good with that which I left. By no means! It is but a word that he speaks. And behind them is a barrier, until the day they will be raised." 23:99-100

Thus, the Holy Qur'an states that the human soul will

not live twice on this Earth, so it will not be allowed to occupy another living body, human or non-human.

The observable facts support this teaching. If the human souls are to occupy new human bodies, there would be no increase in population, because a human soul can occupy only one body. The population of the world was about one billion in the last century. Now we have about five billions. How can we account for the increase of four billions if no new souls are created?

As a matter of fact, if the concept of reincarnation is a reality, the number of the population should not go above two persons, because at the beginning there were only the two human souls of Adam and Eve.

INQUIRY /20

The Commandments or Prohibitions in Islam

Wilson: Both Christianity and Judaism preach the Ten Commandments which were revealed to Moses and recorded in the Old Testament. Does Islam have any commandments, and are they the same or similar?

Chirri: The Ten Commandments are only a portion of the Qur'anic commandments.

Islam commands its followers to avoid many things. Some of them are prohibited because they contradict some of the doctrines in which a Moslem is supposed to believe. Some of them are prohibited because they are immoral or unethical or unhealthy or because they represent disobedience to the devotional duties. These prohibitions may be regarded as Islamic commandments, the violation of which may constitute a major sin, A Muslim is prohibited:

1. To ascribe to God a partner or associate:

"Associate not any other god with the Almighty,

lest thou sit down despised forsaken." 17:22

2. To deny revelation of God to His prophets,

3. To deny any of the prophets who are recognized by the Qur'an, such as Jesus, Moses, Abraham, and Noah. The denial of the revelation or any of the recognized prophets is a denial of Islam.

4. To feel safe in opposition to God:

> "Are they secure against the plan of God? But none feels secure against the plan of God except the losing people." 7:99

5. To lose hope in mercy of God:

> "...And despair not of the mercy of God. Surely none despairs of the mercy of God except the disbelieving people." 12:87

6. To swear in the name of God falsely:

> "Hast thou not seen those who take for friends a people with whom God is wrathful? They are neither of you nor of them, and they swear falsely, while they know. God has prepared for them a severe chastisement. Evil indeed is what they do!" 58:14-15

7. To break a covenant deliberately:

> "And fulfill the covenant of God when you have made a covenant, and break not the oaths after making them fast, and you have, indeed, made God your surety. Surely God knows what you do." 16:91

8. To kill a human being premeditatively:

> "And slay not the soul which God has forbidden except for the just cause. . . ." 17:33

> "Your lives and properties are sacred and inviolable amongst you, until you appear before your Lord. . . ." said the Prophet.

9. To be traitor to the right cause of one's own nation.

10. To help defeat it militarily by retreating at the battlefield when the nation is defending itself against aggression:

> "And whose turns his back to them (the aggressors) on that day (of fight), unless maneuvering for battle or turning to join a company, he indeed incurs God's wrath and his refuge is hell, and an evil destination it is." 8:16

11. To steal.

12. To cheat in measuring or weighing in selling or purchasing:

> "Woe to the cheaters. Who when they take the measure (of their dues) from the people, take it fully, and when they measure out to others or weigh out for them they give less than is due." 83:1-3

13. To use an orphan's fund in a way that is not in his interest:

> "And draw not nigh to the orphan's fund, except in a goodly way, till he attains his maturity, and fulfill the covenant; surely the covenant will be inquired to!" 17:34

14. To insult one's own parent:

"And thy Lord has decreed that ye worship none but Him, and do good to the parents. If one of them or both of them reach old age with thee, say not "Fie" to them, nor chide them, and speak to them kind words. And lower to them the wing of humility of mercy. and say: My Lord, have mercy on them as they brought me up (when I was) little." 17:23-24

15. To commit adultery:

"And go not nigh to fornication; surely it is an obscenity. And evil is the way." 17:32

16. To scandalize people, specially women:

"Those who love to see that scandal should circulate concerning the believers, will have a grievous chastisement in this world and the Hereafter, and God knows, while you know not." 24:19

"Those who scandalize virtuous, believing women (who are) careless, cursed are they in this world and the Hereafter."

"Theirs will be an awful doom, on the day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet testify against them as to what they used to do. On that day God will pay them their just dues, and they will know that God is the Manifest Truth." 24:23-25

17. To spy on others for no purpose of protecting your nation or yourself.

18. To backbite others, exposing to those who do not know, some shameful doing:

> ". . . And spy not nor backbite each other. . ." 49: 12

19. To gamble.

20. To drink intoxicants:

> "O you who believe, intoxicants and games of chance. . . are only an abomination, the devil's work; so shun it, that you may succeed. The devil desires only to create enmity and hatred among you by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to prevent you from the remembrance of God and from prayer. So will you obey this prohibition?" 5:93-94

21. To eat pork or any swine's products.

22. To eat or drink blood. (This does not include transfusion of blood for necessity.)

23. To eat meat of an animal that dies by itself, or the meat of an animal on which the name of other than God is invoked when it is slain:

> "He has forbidden you only what dies of itself, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that over which (a name) other than the name of God is invoked (when it is slaughtered) . . ." 2: 173

24. To lie deliberately or testify falsely or falsify the word of God willingly:

> "Only they forge lies who believe not in the

messages of God, and they are the liars." 16:105

25. To conceal a testimony when called to testify in a litigation:

> ". . .And conceal not testimony. And whoever conceals it, his heart is surely sinful. And God knows what you do." 2:283

26. To deliberately hinder a good cause.

27. To spread hatred by conveying to a person a bad word about him spoken by another person:

> "And obey not any mean swearer, defamer, going about with slander, hinderer of good, transgressing beyond the limits, sinful, ignoble, besides all that, notoriously mischievous. . ." 68:10-13

28. To violate the terms of a dead man's will:

> "Then whoever changes it (the will) after he heard it, the sin of it is only upon those who change it. Surely God is Hearing, Knowing." 2:181

29. To oppress the people.

30. To aid an oppressor .

> "... And let not hatred of a people because they hindered you from the Sacred Mosque incite you to make aggression. And help one another in righteousness and piety, and help not one another in sin and aggression. Surely God is severe in requiting (evil)." 5:9

31. To be proud, looking down on the people:

> "And turn not thy cheek in scorn towards

people, nor go about in the land in insolence. Surely God loves not any self -conceited boaster." 31: 18

32. To be envious, wishing People ill:

"Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the dawn, From the evil of things created, . . . And from the evil of the envious when he envies." 113

33. To antagonize a relative for no right cause:

"Will you be making mischief in the land and cut off the ties of kinship if you come to power?" 47:22

34. To neglect any of the five daily prayers.

35. To break fasting in the days of Ramadan without a legitimate excuse.

36. To withhold the "Zakah" which is the share of the poor in the self-supporting person's wealth.

37. To neglect the duty of pilgrimage to Mecca which has to be done once in a life-time by every person who is physically and financially able to make it.

38. To neglect the duty of advising the people to do good and avoid evil when such an advice is needed and likely to be effective.

The last five are regarded as major sins, because the prayer, fasting, paying Zakah, making pilgrimage and enjoining good and prohibiting evil are Qur'anic duties.

INQUIRY /21

Difference Among Muslims

Wilson: The teaching of Islam seems to be very clear in most of its aspects. None of its doctrines is ambiguous enough to cause a split or dispute among the Muslims. Nevertheless, the Muslims are divided into more than one group. There are the two well-known groups: the Sunni and the Shi-a, and each of the two divisions contains a number of subdivisions. I know that division among the Muslims is not as acute as it is among the Christians. I understand that both Sunni and Shi-a often pray together in one Mosque and that there are no marital barriers between them. No Muslim is required to change his (her) affiliation with his respective group in order to marry a person from another group. But the fact remains that there is division and that there is more than one group.

The split does not seem to be justifiable. However, it took place, and I would like to know the reasons which led to that split.

Chirri: The split among the Muslims may not be characterized as religious. There is some difference on the details of some of the Islamic rules, and this is only a difference in interpretation of some of the Qur'anic words or the Prophet's statements. This has led to the establishment of various schools of thought. Fundamentally, the difference is political; and the germ of it began immediately after the death of the Prophet.

It is a well-known fact that Islam concerns itself with both spiritual and worldly aspects of man's life. The Prophet founded a Muslim state of which he was the head. He administered all religious, political and social affairs. He never showed his companions any sign of separation between religion and state. The well-being of the community and the prevalence of justice among its members are, in his teaching, as important as the devotional work which is required of the individual.

The integration of secular and spiritual affairs in the Muslim state at the time of the Prophet was so crystal clear that no Muslim at the time of the Prophet doubted the need for the establishment and continuity of a Muslim government. Thus, when the Prophet died, in 632, no question was raised about the need for a succeeding ruler. They all agreed on this, but they disagreed on who is to rule.

While Ali, the cousin of the Prophet, and some of the Hashimites (clan of the Prophet) were busy with the holy funeral, some of the Muslims were gathering at a place, called "Saqifat Bani-Sa-idah" to select a new leader.

The Muslim community of Madina, the capital of the Muslim state, was comprised of the natives of Madina and

those who immigrated to Madina. Most of those immigrants (who are called Muhajireen) were from Mecca. The natives of Madina were composed of two tribes, namely "Khazraj" and "Ous." These natives were called "Al-Anssar" (the Helpers). There was some rivalry between the immigrants and the natives of Madina. There was, also, a rivalry between the two Madinite tribes.

The conferees who were gathering to select a successor were mostly Madinites, and they were aiming at choosing one of them for the high office. Sa'ad Ben Abadah, the chief of the Khazrajites was the hopeful one.

The news of the conference reached Abu-Bakr, Omar, and others from the immigrants. They hurriedly went to the conference to prevent the Madinites from implementing their scheme. In debating with the Madinites, they offered the following argument:

The Prophet was a Meccan, and the Meccans are his relatives. Therefore, only a Meccan should succeed him.

By virtue of the mutual jealousy among the Madinites, the Ousites deserted Sa'ad Ben Abadah and leaned towards the Meccans. Abu-Bakr was nominated immediately and the majority of the conferees pledged to him their loyalty. And so did most of the Muslims, immigrants and Madinites. Thus Abu-Bakr became the first "Kalif" (successor) in the history of Islam.

By this, the issue between the Madinites and the immigrants was settled forever; and since then no one from the Madinites ever contended for the right of succession. But the issue was far from being settled among the Meccans themselves.

Ali, as we advanced, was preoccupied with the funeral

of the Prophet. He was not consulted in this important matter. He and many others believed that he was not only the proper one to succeed the Prophet, but also the Prophet's nominee and appointee. He thought that they made a fast deal and manipulated the election. Abu-Bakr and his group had defeated the Madinites by arguing that the Meccans are the relatives of the Prophet. If relationship to the Prophet should entitle any Meccan to succeed him, Ali should be the first one to be offered the job. He is the Prophet's first cousin and son-in-law.

Ali refused to join the supporters of Abu-Bakr and held out for several months. He finally joined the majority and pledged his loyalty to the new government. The situation of the Muslim State was too serious to allow a man, such as Ali, to cause any division in the Muslim community. Most of the Muslims outside Madina and Mecca rose in rebellion against the Madinite government, and a good portion of them disjoined themselves from Islam. The very existence of Islam was in danger. Ali is too pious to take advantage of the difficulty of the Muslim government and too intellectual to worry about some Islamic instructions when the very existence of Islam is at stake. He, therefore, not only joined the supporters of Abu-Bakrbut also took an active part in defending the state against the attacks of the rebellious elements.

When Ali gave up his claim and supported the government, the division among the Muslims disappeared. It remained in a dormant state for two decades during which Abu-Bakr, Omar and Uthman consecutively ruled the Muslim state. Ali was elected after the death of Uthman; and by his rise to power the issue of his rightfulness to be

the first Kalif of the Prophet was awakened.

Ali was the most controversial personality among the companions of the Prophet. He was so magnanimous in the eyes of many pious Muslims that they believed that the succession to the Prophet was his exclusive right. He, at the same time, was bitterly opposed by many elements, and he had to fight three bloody rebellions during his short reign.

The reign of Ali continued for less than five years, and it ended by his assassination. Subsequently, his most ambitious adversary, Muawyah, rose to power. This man ruled the Muslims in a manner entirely different from that by which the four good Kalifs administered the Muslim State. He continued in power about two decades, ruling the people by sword and bribery, and the followers of Ali were subjected to humiliation and persecution during his reign. He transformed the Muslim government from a republic form to a rule of dynasty. His dynasty, the Umayads, continued in government for seventy years after his death.

The political sympathizers of Ali during this period acquired the title of Shi-a which means, follower (of Ali).

The Umayad reign was ended in 750 A.D. by the rise of the Abbasides (descendants of Abbas, one of the uncles of the Prophet and Ali) to power. The Abbasides became the new dynasty which ruled the Muslim state for several hundred years during which the majority of the Muslims were named Sunni to distinguish them from the Shi-a. Thus, the Muslims were divided into Sunnites and Shi-ites.

Wilson: What are the opinions which are maintained by the Sunnites and the Shi-ites in regard to the issue of succession?

Chirri: THE SUNNITES MAINTAIN that Abu-Bakr was a legal Kalif; that the three good Kalifs who ruled consecutively after him, namely: Omar, Uthman and Ali were also legal Kalifs; that the Prophet never nominated anyone to succeed him; and that he left the matter of succession to his companions to exercise their right in choosing their own ruler.

The four Kalifs, however, were chosen by various methods: Abu-Bakr was elected by the Muslims of Madina. Omar was appointed by Abu-Bakr. Uthman was elected by the majority of only six persons whom Omar, before he died, had chosen as qualified for the high office: Ali, Uthman, Sa'ad, Zubair, Talhah, and Abdul-Rahman. No one besides them was allowed to elect or to be elected. The majority of these six had the right to choose the Kalif. The hopeful ones among these six were only two: Ali and Uthman. Ali did not have the support of any of the five except Zubair, and Uthman won the election.

Ali, however, was elected after the death of Uthman by the overwhelming majority of the Muslims.

THE SHI-ITES MAINTAIN that Ali was not only the most proper person to succeed the Prophet, but was also his nominee for the high office. They believe that the Prophet actually appointed Ali as his successor, and that Ali himself had the right to appoint his own successor.

Both views command respect, and both have arguments that command respect.

Wilson: Since the views of each party have been outlined, now I would like you to state clearly the best arguments for each side. And let us start with the Sunnite argument.

Chirri: THE FIRST ARGUMENT FOR THE SUNNITES was introduced, as you may recall, by the immigrants against the Madinites at the conference which was concluded by selecting Abu-Bakr as Kalif. The argument states that the Meccans are the relatives of the Prophet, and that the successor of the Prophet should be one of his relatives.

Wilson: The same argument can be, and actually was, used against the Sunnis in favor of the Shi-is. If blood-relation is to be taken as a foundation for the establishment of a Muslim government, Ali should be the successor, because he was by far closer than Abu-Bakr to the Prophet. He was his first cousin and his son-in-law.

Chirri: In addition to this, relationship to the Prophet cannot be a suitable base for the legality of a Muslim government. We know that Islam stands firmly and clearly against aristocracy and all inherited social privileges. The Muslims pride themselves upon the fact that there are no classes in Islam, and that all people from any nation or family are equal in the eyes of God. The Holy Qur'an declares the following:

> "O mankind, certainly We created you from a male and a female and made you nations and clans, that you may recognize one another. Surely the Most noble among you in the eyes of God is the most righteous of you." 49:13

The Prophet himself declared:

> ". . . Certainly God has done away with the boastfulness of pre-Islamic society and its pride upon the ancestors. There is no superiority for an

> Arab over a non Arab. (Nor is there any superiority for a non-Arab over an Arab.) Certainly the most noble of you in the eyes of God is the most pious of you."

The very concept of preference of a "Qureshite" (Meccan) or a Hashimite over the rest of the people is in contrast with the spirit of equality upon which the Muslims pride themselves. It means that God discriminates and favors certain families or clans above the rest of mankind. We, therefore, have no choice but to disregard any concept of discrimination and favoritism of this sort and consider it entirely alien to Islam. For this, the argument of relationship should be entirely disregarded.

THE SECOND ARGUMENT FOR THE SUNNIS can be stated as follows: Islam respects and sanctifies the natural rights of every individual. The political freedom is one of these sacred rights. Every individual has the right to share in administering public affairs of his community, either directly or indirectly by authorizing and electing someone to represent him in such an administration. No one can be legally ruled against his will, and no man's freedom should be curtailed without his own permission. The establishment of any legal government can be achieved through the authorization of the individuals and by their own selection.

Abu-Bakr was elected by the majority of the companions of the Prophet. They elected him by their own choice and through the exercise of their natural right. His government, therefore, was legal and democratic.

Wilson: This argument seems to be very sound and

based on the recognition of what we now call "inalienable rights." Now let us turn to the arguments of the Shi-ites.

Chirri: The Shi-ite as well as the Sunnite agree that a legal government can be established through election of the populace. The political freedom and the right of the individual in choosing his own government are recognized by all Muslims, including the Shi-ite. The Shi-ite, however, views (and the Sunnite does not deny) that election by populace is not the only way through which a legal government can be established. Omar was appointed by Abu-Bakr as his successor, and Uthman was elected by the majority of only six persons, and both are regarded by the Sunnites as legal Kalifs.

A RESPECTABLE ARGUMENT FOR THE SHI-ITE CAN BE INTRODUCED by stating the following points:

1. Man's freedom can be legally curtailed and restricted by one of the two following ways:

a. It may be restricted by his own permission and authorizing his elected government to inact rules that may limit his freedom or lead him to give up some of his rights.

b. It may be restricted and curtailed by the Creator of the individual Who gave him his freedom and natural rights. He may impose on His servants rules which could curtail their freedom for their own interest. No one knows exactly what is good for him, but God knows what is good for us at present and in the future. We owe our freedom, our rights and our very existence to His generosity. If He chooses for us any type of government, that government will be legal.

2. A government established by a Divine appointment was possible at the time of the Prophet:

The Prophet, according to the Holy Qur'an, has the jurisdiction to appoint and select for the Muslims a succeeding government. The Holy Qur'an vests, in him the authority to choose for the Muslims whatever is in their interests. He is the guardian of the Muslims, and he has the right to administer their public affairs more than they have the right to do it on their own:

> "The Prophet has the right over the believers more than they have the right over their own selves. . . ." 33:6

The decision of the Prophet in all affairs of the Muslim State is binding on all Muslims. They have no right to reverse it or change it. From the Holy Qur'an:

> "And it becometh not a believing man or a believing woman, when God and His Messenger have decided an affair (for them), that they should (after that) claim any say in their affairs; and whoever is rebellious to God and His Messenger, he verily goeth astray in error manifest." 33:36

Thus, when the Prophet appoints or nominates a successor to rule the Muslim State after him, his choice is to be followed and his decision is binding.

3. Since there were two legitimate ways to establish a succeeding government, the Prophet, the Shi-ite may contend, was expected to choose and appoint his successor and not to leave such an important matter to the Muslim community. Leaving it to the Muslim community in such an early stage of development could have been fraught with dangers.

The Muslim government was based on a set of reformatory principles aimed at changing people's belief and their way of life by introducing a new ideology which was accepted reluctantly by their majority.

To explain this: The government may be based on certain concepts and principles prevalent in the society and desirable to the majority of the people. The establishment of such a government should be left to the people and their choice. Such a government may have plans and programs, but none of its plans or programs would be legal unless it meets the approval of the majority. The people themselves are the highest authority to judge those plans and programs. Such a government can exist and remain in office legally only by the support of the majority, and it may legally fall when it is deprived of that support.

THE REFORMATORY PRINCIPLES

There is another type of government which is based on a set of reformatory principles aiming at changing the condition of the people and reforming their beliefs and characters.

Such principles are usually unpopular and undesirable to the people. The principles are usually introduced by an individual or a minority of people who are dissatisfied with the old ideology to which the majority subscribes. To apply the new ideology and make it work, a government based on the same principles must be established. The duty of such a government is to put the new ideology at work and to try to guard it against any possible danger.

Such a government is actually a government of minority, and it usually rises to power without being accepted

by the majority. If such a government is to leave office, it is expected to appoint its successor and not to leave the establishment of the succeeding government to a free election.

To illustrate this: Suppose that a Capitalistic minority succeeds in taking over the government in a country where the Communistic system is established and genuinely accepted. When such a government replaces the old system by its own, it would be expected to try to perpetuate its ideology. What would be the duty of such a minority government when it is about to leave office?

Under the circumstances, the government would not be expected to leave the establishment of the next government to a free election. Since the new system is imposed on, or reluctantly accepted by the majority, a free election may lead to the destruction of the new system. When people are allowed to choose freely the government they desire, they would elect only the admirers of the old system. (The same will be true if a Communistic minority takes over the government of a Capitalistic country.)

The duty of the government, therefore, is to guard the new system and to trust and appoint only the most sincere supporter of its ideology as a head of the succeeding government.

The appointment of successors should continue until the new ideology is genuinely accepted by the people and its continuity is reasonably secured. The continuity of the new ideology can be secured only when it becomes a natural way of life to the community. This may not be accomplished until the ideology is received by the following generations as a part of their heritage.

Suppose the new system is seemingly adopted by the community in general and that the people have been converted to the new ideology. The duty of the government is still to be cautious and to take no risk that may jeopardize its achievement. The government will be duty-bound to trust in the administration of the state only those whose sincerity and efficiency are beyond any doubt. To leave the matter of establishment of a new government to the choice of the majority is to take a risk. A free election may bring to office the best or the worst. A wise guardian of a new ideology does not take such a risk at an early stage of development.

ISLAM IS A REFORMATORY IDEOLOGY

4. The religion of Islam introduced a new ideology which was unpopular in the Arabian society. The new ideology aimed at changing people's belief and way of life. The idols which were endeared and worshipped by the people were to be destroyed. Only the One God, the Creator of the universe, is to be worshipped. The stubborn and the proud Arabs are to kneel and prostrate for God many times a day. The low desires of adultery, murder, plunder, gambling and drinking are no longer legitimate ways of life. Lawlessness and anarchy are to be replaced by discipline and order. Selfishness and hatred are to be replaced by the hard and unselfish work and sacrifice for the welfare of the community. A portion of every man's wealth is to be paid for supporting the poor and the programs which the government undertakes for improvement of the people's condition. The right side is to be supported and followed against the wrong side, even if it is your own relatives.

None of these reformatory principles were desirable to the society to which Islam was introduced. These principles were vehemently opposed by the overwhelming majority. The struggle was finally won by Islam only after a great deal of tears and blood.

We can hardly expect the Prophet who won the struggle after twenty-three years full of sacrifice, misery, and trouble, to depart from this world leaving the ideology of Islam unguarded by not appointing for administration the best fitting person among his followers.

5. The risk which would be taken in leaving the establishment of the succeeding government to the choice of the people can be underscored by stating the following facts: From among the masses of inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula, there were only a few scores of individuals who were capable of reading or writing. The masses of the people were totally uneducated. They joined Islam after the new faith had prevailed. As soon as they heard the news of the death of the Prophet, most of them rose in rebellion, and a great portion of the nation deserted the faith. The future of Islam was extremely darkened, and the true Muslims faced uncertainty.

The Prophet himself had foreseen this condition, and shortly before his death he declared:

> "The faith-testing crises are closing in like pieces of a dark night. . ."

It is inconceivable that the Prophet, under such circumstances, would not try to secure the best possible leadership for his young Muslim State before he departs from this world.

Wilson: Granted that all these points are right, they do not necessarily lead to the drawn conclusion. It is true that the majority of the Muslims outside Madina were not dependable and sincere in their adoption of Islam. But the companions of the Prophet who supported the cause of Islam and offered so many sacrifices for its promotion were dependable and sincere. They accompanied the Prophet for years and became well-educated in the faith of Islam. The Prophet may have left the establishment of the succeeding government to these people. They belonged to the new ideology. They were its genuine supporters. There was no risk in trusting them.

Chirri: The sincerity of many of the companions of the Prophet is beyond any reasonable doubt. It would only be fair to assume that men like Ali, Abu-Bakr, Omar, Uthman, Salman the Persian, Abu-Tharr and so many others from the immigrants and Madinites were genuine supporters of the cause of Islam. They had offered for its promotion many sacrifices for a long period of time. They were also well-educated in the Islamic teaching, and they were good students and disciples of the Prophet. The fact remained, the Shi-ites say, that the majority of the companions were not purified completely from their old clannish attachments.

Islam aimed at replacing the narrow bond of blood-relation by a general brotherhood and feeling of equality among the Muslims. But the period was too short for these people to forget the past and live up to the ideal teaching of their faith. The influence of tribal ties on their thinking was obvious. The conference which was held by the Madinites has shown a great deal of tribal prejudice. Their aim was to select one of the Madinites as a ruler and to prevent

the Meccans from assuming the leadership. The Meccans, on the other hand, were determined to keep the leadership of the state in their hand.

Both sides overlooked the principle of equality and universal brotherhood which the Prophet endeavored to establish. None of them was looking for the fittest person in the Muslim community for the leadership in such a critical period. Had all of them been true adherents to the Islamic teaching. they would have searched their conscience and looked for the best possible leader, disregarding all regional and tribal ties. This important aspect was entirely forgotten or overlooked. Merely being a Meccan companion was good enough for the Meccans, and merely being a Madinite companion was good enough for the Madinites.

Suppose that they all were free of clannish prejudice. This does not mean that those companions were equally knowledgeable in Islam. Nor would it mean that the majority of them were wise enough to select the proper leadership for that critical period. There were many outstanding persons in the community, and probably the majority of the companions considered them all potential leaders. Their knowledge about these persons was limited, and none of them knew enough about them to select their best. Only the Prophet was able to classify them and choose the most fitting for leadership in that period.

The Muslims, however, were fortunate enough to select a man like Abu-Bakr. What would have happened if they had chosen a good companion but unfitting leader such as Uthman? It may have led to the destruction of the Muslim State. Foreseeing the forthcoming crises, the Prophet was expected to avoid the Muslims any such consequences by

selecting the best leader to succeed him in the dangerous period.

Wilson: Granted that all the advanced points are logical, this may only prove the need for the appointment of a leader on the part of the Prophet. This, however, does not prove that the Prophet had actually appointed a successor. The argument is telling us that the Prophet was expected to provide the proper leadership for all the Muslims, and that he ought to have done what was expected. It does not tell us that he actually did so. There is a clear difference between what ought to be done and what actually was done.

Furthermore, if the argument is entirely sound, it does not tell us who was appointed by the Prophet. It might have been Ali or Abu-Bakr or anyone else.

Chirri: The Shi-ites say that the Prophet had actually appointed Ali to the high post, by declaring him the "Moula" (guardian) of the believers. While returning from his Valedictory Pilgrimage, the Prophet, according to many authentic hadiths (related statements), called the multitude of pilgrims who were accompanying him, to hear an important declaration. (This declaration was delivered at a place called "Ghadir Khamm."):

> "O People," the Prophet exclaimed, "The time is drawing nigh when I receive a Divine call to which I will respond(by departing from this world); I shall be questioned, and ye will be questioned. What will be your answer?" The multitude replied: We bear witness that you have conveyed the message (of God) and endeavored (in His way) and that your endeavor was sincere, unselfish. The

> Prophet said: "Is it not true that you bear witness that there is no god but the Almighty; that Mohammad is His servant and messenger; that His paradise is a reality; that His hell is reality; that death is right; that resurrection after death is truth; that the Day of Judgment is truth; and that God shall bring back to life those who are in the graves?"
>
> The multitude replied: Yea, we bear witness unto that.
>
> The Prophet said: "O God, bear witness."

Following this, the Prophet announced the appointment of Ali for the high office. Such an appointment on his part requires a constitutional authority. Therefore, he reminded them of the fact that the Holy Qur'an vested in him this authority by declaring him the guardian of the believers:

> "O people," he said, "God is my 'Moula' (guardian), and I am the Moula of the believers, and I have the right over the believers more than they have the right over their own selves.
>
> Whoever I am his Moula, this Ali (He was holding Ali's hand) is his Moula.
>
> O God, be friend his friend and cast out of Thy favor his enemy."

Wilson: If the Prophet had actually selected Ali for the leadership of the Muslims, he should have tried to prepare the Muslims, not only by words, but also by deeds for the acceptance of his decision. He should have made the atmosphere suitable for implementing such an important plan. Had the Prophet done anything of this sort?

Chirri: The Prophet, say the Shi-ites, not only appointed Ali by words but also tried to secure this position for him by deed.

The Muslim historians agree that when the Prophet was seriously ill, he sensed the approach of his death. At that time he ordered the Muslim army to leave Madina to the borders of Syria under the leadership of Usama, the son of Zeid. Abu-Bakr and Omar were ordered to leave with the army. Of the outstanding companions, only Ali was to stay in Madina.

While his condition was growing critical, the Prophet repeatedly urged the army to leave Madina. But Abu-Bakr, Omar, and many other companions remained in Madina, saying that they hate to leave while the Prophet is so ill. As a result, the whole army remained camping in the vicinity of the city until Abu-Bakr was elected after the death of the Prophet. To sum up:

The Prophet knew the approach of his death. He ordered the ambitious companions to take a long journey, and wanted Ali to stay beside him. Putting these together makes it obvious that the Prophet wanted Ali to take over after him, unchallenged .

Wilson: The plan, however, did not materialize. Ali did not rule, Abu-Bakr did. He not only ruled, but also appointed Omar as his successor. Omar, in turn, indirectly appointed Uthman to succeed him. Shall we infer from this that the companions of the Prophet ignored the Prophet's order and disobeyed him deliberately?

Chirri: The answer is "no." If the will of the Prophet were to secure the leadership for Ali, and if he had made it

clear to his companions, we ought to assume that the companions had unwittingly underestimated the seriousness of the matter. They thought that the leadership is only a temporal issue, in which they have the choice to follow the Prophet's recommendation or to make their own decision. As a result, they chose to decide for themselves.

To think that they deliberately chose to disobey the Prophet in such an important matter does not seem to be logical. We owe it to the companions of the Prophet to think good of them and not to doubt their good intentions when they make a wrong decision. They were good Muslims, and the Holy Qur'an recommends that we pray God to forgive our brothers who preceded us in embracing the faith, let alone the companions who were the first Muslim community that ever existed in the world.

Our attitude now towards the issue ought to be far from being emotional. We ought not to weep over the spilled milk. Nothing can be retrieved by taking sides on the issue. Both Ali and Abu-Bakr died and met the Lord, and the time of the caliphate has entirely elapsed. Any discussion about it should be no more than a discussion of a certain period of the Islamic history. Such a discussion can be conducted by non-Muslims as well as by Muslims. The purpose of such a discussion is not to support a particular side, but to reach or form an impartial conclusion or opinion.

Holding a negative attitude towards either side would only generate hatred and division among the Muslims. This, no doubt, is a displeasure to Ali who gave up his claim and supported Abu-Bakr to avoid any division among the Muslims. To cause a division for the sake of Ali is to be kingly more than the king himself.

The Sunnis, on the other hand, have no right to be disturbed by the attitude of the Shi-ites towards the first three Kalifs. Nothing in the Islamic teaching prohibits a negative attitude towards any of the three. The legality of their rule is not an article of the faith, and their rightfulness is a political, and not a religious, issue. In such a political issue, every Muslim has the right to form his own opinion without violating any Islamic instruction.

To have an unfriendly attitude towards scores of millions of Muslims because of their negative attitude towards three outstanding Muslims does not seem to be logical. Nor is it warranted by the teaching of Islam.

Wilson: The issue of the succession in ruling the Muslim State may have caused a good deal of dispute among the Muslims throughout the centuries, but it does not seem to be important enough to divide the Muslims into sects today. The whole issue seems to be political rather than religious. It may become religious when it causes the Muslims to dispute in the areas of the articles of the faith or the Islamic laws. Do the Sunnis and the Shi-ites disagree with each other in these religious areas? And is their disagreement in these areas related to their political views?

Chirri: There is no disagreement between the Shi-ites and the Sunnis on the articles of the faith. They all agree on the truthfulness of the Qur'an and the statements of the Prophet without any exception. Both sides derive their views and conclusions in the religious matters from these two important sources.

There are, however, disagreements on some of the details of the Islamic laws. These disagreements are due, partly,

to the difference in understanding and interpreting some of the verses of the Holy Qur'an and some of the statements of the Prophet.

Some of the disagreements on the details of the Islamic rules are due to the following reasons:

1. Absence of specific instructions in both the Qur'an and the statements of the Prophet.

2. Lack of clarity in some of these statements and the capability of being interpreted in more than one way.

3. The existence of two opposite statements, both attributed to the Prophet.

One of the examples of disagreement caused by difference in interpretation of the Holy Qur'an is the following:

All Muslims agree that ablution is a requirement for a sound prayer, and that ablution would be undone by intercourse. They disagree on whether mere physical contact between man and woman, such as shaking hands, would undo the ablution of both of them. The reason is the difference in interpreting the following verse:

> "And if ye be ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from the toilet, or ye have touched women, and ye find no water, then go to high clean soil and rub your faces. . . ." 4:43

Some schools take the word "touch" literally and think that touch in any way would undo the ablution. Other schools understand from the word touch the intercourse.

Disagreements on the details of the Islamic rules exist not only between the Shi-ites and the Sunnis; they exist among the Sunnis themselves and among the Shi-ites them-

selves. With little exceptions, there is not any Shi-a's view or verdict that disagrees with all the Sunnis' views, and there is not any Sunni's view that is opposed to all Shi-ites' views. You can almost pick up any Sunni's verdict or interprétation, and you are bound to find the same view shared by some Shi-ites; and vice versa.

Disagreement on the details of some of the Islamic rules did not cause the Muslims to be divided into sects. It, however, caused the formation of many schools of thoughts which are called "Mazhabs:", (Mazhab is a set of opinions or verdicts attributed to an outstanding imam who is considered, at least by his followers, as the prime authority in jurisprudence and Islamic law). Among these Mazhabs are the following living schools: Maliki, Hanafi, Shafi-i, Hunbuli, Jaafari, and Zeidi.

All these schools rely, and draw on, the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Prophet. But the first four are called Sunni, and the last two are called Shi-i.

The difference between the Shi-ite and the Sunnite schools is not greater than the difference among the Sunnite schools themselves. The political affiliation, however, made the followers of the Sunni schools frown upon the Shi-ite schools, and vice versa.

Wilson: Your explanation shows that the difference between the two sides is very small and negligible. Some efforts should have been made by some scholars to bring the two sides together and to bring about a good understanding and reconciliation.

Chirri: Many efforts had been made throughout the history of Islam to heal the rift, but they did not meet a tan-

gible success. The failure may be attributed to many factors. Among them are: the intolerant spirit of the ages; the presence of tyrant kalifs who sought the support of one side by persecution of another side which holds unfavorable opinion towards them; and the wrong approach to the issue.

Our age has a different spirit, and the caliphate was buried at the beginning of this century. What we need is to have a solemn thinking and a new evaluation of the whole matter .

THE ENDEAVOR OF THE AUTHOR FOR ISLAMIC UNITY

Wilson: I heard that you travelled to the Middle East and met the late Sheikh El-Azhar in 1959 and tried to iron out the difference between the two sides. I would like you to tell me more about this important event.

Chirri: On the first of July, 1959, I met the late Sheikh Al-Azhar, Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltute (may God bless his soul). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the problem of division between the followers of the various Islamic schools whose difference, until that time, was conceived as an outstanding problem in the Muslim world. I wanted to know his opinion about the Jaafari Mazhab to which he does not belong. I thought that a favorable attitude on his part toward this Mazhab might be a uniting point between the two sides, since most of the Shi-ites belong to the Jaafari school.

I asked him if he believes in the soundness of the Jaafari teaching and its equality to his own Mazhab. His answer was in the affirmative. Upon this, I requested him to state to

the Muslim World his view on the important issue, in a clear verdict. A declaration of equality between the Jaafari and the Sunni Mazhabs from Sheikh Al-Azhar would, to my estimation, be a sound solution to the problem, at least in theory. Such a declaration, I told him, would bring the Sunni side to moderation because you are their highest authority. And the Shi-ites will rejoice at such a declaration. The Shi-ites do not seek privilege or superiority. All what they seek is equality.

The declaration was the first of its kind in the history of Islam. It was issued as an answer to a question submitted to him, and announced on the sixth of July, 1959. The declaration was joyfully received in many Muslim countries.

The following is a translation of the declaration which was published in the Egyptian and Lebanese press[1]:

> His eminence (Sheikh Al-Azhar, Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltute) was asked: Some people view that in order to have religiously sound devotions and transactions, the Muslim has to follow one of the four known (Islamic) Mazhabs: Hanafi, Shafi-i, Hunbuli, and Maliki. This excludes the two Shi-i Mazhabs: Imami (Jaafari) and Zeidi. Do you agree with this view without qualification and advise the Muslims not to follow the Ithna-Ashari Imami (Jaafari) school for example?

His eminence answered (by setting forth the following points as an introduction to his verdict which is the last part of his answer):

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(1) This is the translation of what appeared in *Al-Kifah* (a Lebanese newspaper), issue of July 8, 1959.

1. It is permissible to the "non-Mujtahid" (the one who is not qualified to give his own opinion or verdict in the Islamic law) to follow the opinion of any of the "Olama" (Muslim scholars), whose knowledge and piety are believed, provided such an opinion reaches its follower in a correct and nearly certain way, directly or indirectly. We should not be concerned with a view expressed in some books which claims that (he four Mazhabs are the only ones to follow or that it is not permissible for a person to change from one Mazhab to another.

Sheikh Izzuddeen, the son of Abdulsalam said: The Muslims used to seek information about the Islamic laws, from any "alim" (Muslim Scholar) they happened to meet, regardless of the school to which he belonged. And such a way of obtaining information never was disapproved (by the Muslim Scholars) until these schools (the four appeared with their followers who became so bigoted that the follower of a Mazhab would follow his "imam" (leader) even if his opinion was supportable by no evidence. He followed him as if he were a messenger prophet. This is a shyness from the truth and soundness. it should not be accepted by the People of understanding.

2. The word "Shi-a," by which the followers of Ali (the son of Abu-Talib) are known, is derived from the word "Mushaya-ah" which means to follow. So the Shia of a person are his companions and followers. The name (Shi-a) has been given to many groups who disagree with Islam in many basic beliefs and laws. It is not permissible to fol-

low the teaching of such groups because they are out of the circle of Islam.

3. There are other groups related to "Ali," and they are his well-guided Shi-a who oppose and condemn the misguided ones. Of these good Shi-a is the group which is known by the name of "Jaafari" or "Imami Ithna Ashari."

4. This well-known group follows principles that are taken from the Book of God and the teaching of His Messenger which reached them through their imams in both fundamental belief and Islamic law. The difference between the Jaafari and Sunni schools is not greater than the difference among the Sunni schools themselves. They (the Jaafaris) believe in the fundamental principles of Islam as they are stated in the Glorious Qur'an and the certain teaching of the Prophet. They also believe in all the rules whose inclusion in the religion of Islam is self evident and whose recognition is required for being a Muslim and the denial of which excludes the person from Islam.

5. The Mazhab of these Jaafari Shi-ites in the Islamic laws is completely recorded and well-known. It has its own books, conveyers (who related the statements of the Prophet and the imams) and the supporting evidence. The authors of these books and those from whom these authors had received the (hadiths) are well-known, and their scholarly and jurisprudential ranks are respected among the Muslim scholars.

THE DECLARATION

From this explanation, it becomes evident that:

1. *Islam does not command any of its followers to follow a particular Islamic Mazhab. On the contrary, it establishes for every Muslim the right to follow, at the beginning, anyone of the correctly conveyed Mazhabs, whose verdicts are recorded in their respective books. It is permissible also for anyone that follows one of these schools to change to another one - any other schooland - he is not sinning by doing that.*

2. *The Jaafari school which is known as "the Mazhab of the Ithna-Ashari, Imami Shi-I" is a sound Mazhab. It is permissible to worship God according to its teaching, like the rest of the Sunni Mazhabs.*

3. *The Muslims ought to know this and get rid of their undue bigotry for particular Mazhabs. The religion of God and His law do not follow, nor are they bound to, a particular Mazhab. All (the founders of these Mazhabs) are Mujtahid (qualified to give verdict), reward-deserving from God, and acceptable to Him. It is permissible to the "non-Mujtahid" to follow them and to accord with their teaching, whether in devotions or transactions.*